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FEATURE DETECTIVE STORY

The TALKING DOG

by

Frank Blighton

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Contents

FEATURE NOVELETTE

The Talking Dog 3
By Frank Blighton

TWO-PART SERIAL

The Ghosts of Alwyn Lodge (Part One) 28
By Jean Ross

SPECIAL ARTICLE

What Handwriting Reveals 60
By Louise Rice

SHORT STORIES

The Swinging Shadow 23
By Hamilton Craigie

Life in Dead Ashes 35
By Joe Burke

Easy Money 41
By Edgar Daniel Kramer

The Cigarette Butt 46
By Joe Kleier

Shoes 50
By Frederick C. Davis

Three for Seattle 56
By Earl W. Scott

Mystery in Seized Vessel 22

Crime Prevention to Deter Crooks 40

A River of Ink 45

Doughnuts to the Convicts 49

Thumbprints by Telephone 55

An Old Bunco Game 59

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The TALKING DOG

by Frank Blighton

CHAPTER ONE

THE DUMB DOG.

WHEN Peter Kowalski first decided to kill his wife Minnie, he did an unusual thing for a man who had worked as a blacksmith at the Vronsbury Tool Company's factory for more than ten years.

He determined to kill her in their home within a hundred feet of the house where Mr. and Mrs. John Hartnett lived; to walk out the same as if Minnie were living; to go and see Jacob Borse, the farmer who owned the place Minnie and Peter intended to buy, and to take "Pil," their pet dog, with him, so that the murder would not be discovered before he came back and then "discover" it himself.

For "Pil" was a cross between a fox terrier and a bull, very keen of scent, very attached to them both and they to the animal. They had raised him from a puppy, and named him in honor of a president of far-off Poland, where Peter and Minnie had both been born and their parents before them. "Pil" was the dog's abbreviated name.

Peter Kowalski had no compunction about murder. Most people have. Most murders are crimes of impulse, and the impulse to kill is roused either through anger or greed—sometimes both. With Peter it was quite different. Somewhere far back in his ancestry Peter's forefathers or foremothers had married some man or woman of Tartar blood. The Tartar is ferocious, cunning, merciless. "Catch a Tartar" is a proverb. A "Tartar" is hard to catch and harder to hold. He is a "tough egg," in police parlance.

So Peter Kowalski thought it all out very quietly. He weighed the chances for and against his detection. Minnie and he were childless, although they had been married for five years. There was no one but the dog, Pil, and Pil couldn't talk, even if he saw Peter kill Minnie.

So Peter did a most unusual thing for a blacksmith fully three months before the time set for killing Minnie. He had strength and skill in his craft; he also had other valuable things which he made no attempt to market, among them being discrimination, imagination and quite a bit of education gleaned in the common schools.

So he stepped unseen into the twilight world of his intentions from the first shadowy beginning of the idea to kill Minnie, take the five thousand dollars they had each worked so hard to save, and which Minnie thought would be used to buy the farm of

Jacob Borse, and leave the country after a decent interval.

Minnie didn't know that the farm would never be bought; that she would never give up her work in Vronsbury as a waitress in a restaurant and "settle down" on the farm with Peter, or that Peter would never plow the rich, black soil or milk the cows or feed the pigs—all as they had planned to do.

Peter Kowalski alone knew that they would not, for he had other plans. For years these plans had been part of his life, unguessed by any one. They were one long dream, invisible, inaudible, intangible to any one who was looking at him—yet they were there, always, a part of his real life, and the part that really mattered.

Peter's father had been naturalized and so had Peter, as well. So he was an American citizen. He had gone out of school after finishing the grammar grade, became a blacksmith's apprentice and, later, a toolmaker at the forge in the Vronsbury factory.

No one ever suspected that as Peter looked into the white-hot forge he saw anything else than the tool he was making or repairing. No one but he knew that in that thin golden mist were other shapes than the tools—waving, brandishing objects, the gilded ivory of bared arms or shoulders of nymphs, the white of inner arms held on high. No one but Peter Kowalski saw in the cherry-red glow of the heated iron the wide, red mouth of a girl or could have imagined that the twisting smoke was her curls.

Only Peter Kowalski knew that, and he never told any one save little Pil, the dog, and Pil was dumb.

These things that he saw—these wild, wanton figures of nymphs—were the women of other lands than this hard, prosaic America; they were the enticing figures which waved to him invitations to come and find them—in the Balkans, perhaps, or in the Caucasus; to revel with them, to drink and dance with them. For there was strange sweet wine brewed in those far-off purple hills, and the women of that land did not have short, thick limbs, but long, slender ones; their hair was not twisted up into a hard little knot nor were their faces wrinkled with care nor their forms bent with toil.

Minnie was that way. Minnie was his wife. It took money for Peter to make that trip—much money. But, following the war, the money of those lands was not worth much, and enough American money would make him a virtual millionaire abroad.

Minnie and he had saved five thousand dollars, or would have this sum saved within three months. That five thousand dollars would be enough. But Minnie could not go, nor would she let Peter spend the money in this way. So he decided to kill Minnie. He whispered hints of this to Pil, the dog, for Pil was dumb and could never tell what was told to him.

That was the only flaw in Peter's plan. The rest of it was perfect—every detail. It stood the test and not one other link of his long chain of ideas weakened or gave way.

But how could Peter Kowalski imagine that little Pil, the dog, would some day talk and thereby catch and convict him of murder?

CHAPTER TWO

ADVANCE ALIBIS

"IT is a good idea," Peter told himself one morning soon after he had half-determined to murder Minnie. Minnie had been wrathful and waspish that morning. They had been in the garden. Mr. and Mrs. John Hartnett could not help hearing what Minnie said, for their house was just over the fence along which the garden ran.

Peter and his wife and the Harnetts and a few score other folks lived in the village of Downing Corners, some three miles from Vronsbury—a factory town. They went in and out by trolley.

Knowing that Minnie was overheard and his reply would be likewise overheard, Peter Kowalski began his alibis three months before he committed his crime.

"You are quite right, my dear," said he,

with an affectionate husband's mildness and tenderness. "Pil does dig up the garden to hide bones in it. But he is only a dog and looks on this soft ground as we look on a safe deposit box in the bank. I do not blame you for feeling hurt that he has pawed the dirt away from these onions. He shall do so no more. I will keep him in his kennel all day and only let him out when I get home from work at night, for you work too hard, my Minnie, to have a dog destroy the things you do."

Peter wasn't thinking so much of the onions as of the excuse it would give him to tie the dog in the kennel some evening when he wanted to murder Minnie. It would be embarrassing to have the dog come romping into the house, smell the blood and then rush out whining and howling. That would attract attention at an awkward time.

Peter was thinking it all out. He would kill Minnie somewhere in the house and then leave it. Kill her with the axe which he used to cut the wood in the cellar, but he would do it upstairs. That would make it look as if some one else had done it, for Peter never took the axe upstairs.

He would kill her on the other side of the house and on the ground floor, so that the Hartnetts would not see it done—but they would see Minnie alive and well, laughing and chatting with him, and he would laugh and chat, too. That would be in his favor if he was suspected.

For Peter knew that he could not hope to remain unsuspected. In fact, he expected to be suspected; and, what was more to the point, he wanted to be suspected, to be put under arrest and to measure his inherited Tartar cunning against District Attorney Wayne's skill and acumen.

He figured and thought on that, too. To baffle the Dictrict Attorney he must have many circumstances to make that gentleman hesitate before trying to have him indicted for murder.

"I will be very kind to Minnie," said he. "I will be kind to her when she is alone and when we are near other people. This will make her think I am going to buy the Borse farm, as she has planned; it will also let me call witnesses if I am tried that I was always kind and good to my wife. Not many husbands are. If other people take the witness stand and tell how kind I was to Minnie always, then the jury, if I am tried, will not believe I killed her, since no one shall see me do the deed—no, not even little Pil!"

Peter did not dissimulate or feign his kindness. He was kind. Several evenings he took Minnie to the little movie theatre. They walked arm-in-arm. He greeted people with a smile that quite transformed his usually frowning face. He laughed like a child at the funny pictures, and on the way home his wife and he discussed the "feature" picture.

He had always carried the wood up from the cellar, brought in the water from the well and taken out and emptied the tubs when Minnie did the washing. He helped her dry the dishes. He showed his consideration for her in scores of ways.

And it had its effect.

One day Mrs. Hartnett, talking with Minnie Kowalski after Peter had gone to the factory to work, said:

"Do you know, John and I were talking about your husband. We think he is a diamond in the rough. He seems more like a lover than a husband."

And the unsuspicious Minnie replied:

"Yes, Peter is a good man. All of his life he has worked hard. And now we can buy the Borse farm in September. We will move out there. He will work through the winter at the factory, but in the spring he will leave it forever. The rest of his life will be out of doors and so will mine. I shall raise squabs for the hotel market, and nice plump broilers, and keep bees like my father did in Poland when I was a little girl. And Peter will be a real farmer like his father. We will have the money all saved by September—that is, the first payment. The rest is to be paid each year and it is not a large sum."

"I wish John could save as Peter does," said Mrs. Hartnett.

"Peter is thrifty. He wears his old clothes. Sometimes at the factory they make fun of his old hat. Only last night he

told me. But he said it was a good hat, and would last him for two more years and the money for a new hat should go to buy the lumber for my poultry and squab yard," smiled Minnie. "Yes, I would not trade Peter for any silk-hat man in the factory at Vronsbury."

Peter Kowalski did not confine his alibi-manufacturing to merely overt demonstrations of his kindness to Minnie before people. He spoke to his employer about the change he would make in the fall.

"Minnie, she is a good wife. She has worked with me for five years now," he said. "All of her wages and most of mine we have laid by. In September we will buy the Peter Borse farm. I will work through the winter in the factory. In the spring I will become a farmer, too."

"We shall be sorry to lose you, Peter," said his employer. "You have never missed a day, the foreman says, and your work is well done and done quickly. I do not know how we shall fill your place when you do go."

CHAPTER THREE

THE BLOW FROM BEHIND

SEPTEMBER came. Peter and Minnie had their money in the Vronsbury National Bank. The knowledge that his emancipation was near made Peter's smile more bright and his manner toward Minnie more tender.

They studied the catalogs and price lists about squabs with little Pil listening gravely.

"There will be wire netting needed," said Peter, "and that is expensive. I wonder if Peter Borse would not take five hundred dollars less and thus let us put that sum into these building materials? If he only would, then by spring you might have birds ready for the hotel market and nice chickens, too. I must speak to him some day."

"I do not think that he will," said Minnie, "for he would not last spring when we paid him the first money to bind the bargain."

"He has had good crops," said Peter. "He will be well fixed. And sometimes a man may change his mind—eh?"

They were talking in the garden. Peter had been digging potatoes. He gently rebuked Minnie for picking them up.

"Let me do it," said he. "You work too hard in the restaurant. You are on your feet almost all day."

The first faint scarlet was beginning to creep into the edge of the leaves among the maple trees in their yard. The grapes were taking on their dusky purple bloom.

Minnie sat down on a box under the arbor and Peter quickly gathered the potatoes and took them down cellar. When he came back for more he said:

"I hope you put up some grape jelly for me this year. You make it ever so much better than the stuff they sell in the stores. Besides, we shall save our pennies—eh?"

"Yes," said Minnie. "Tomorrow we will go to the bank. I will get the money and bring it home. Then we will go to Jacob Borse and pay for the farm."

"Let us go on Sunday morning," said Peter, affably, "if you do not mind. I want to walk over and see if he will not take a little less on this payment so I may buy the things for the poultry yard."

"Then," said Minnie, "I had better wait until Saturday morning to draw the money from the bank."

"If I were you," said Peter, casually, "I would not wait until Saturday morning, because that morning the bank is very crowded with people. They come to get payrolls and draw money. Sometimes thieves come, too. They watch for people who go in and out."

"You are right, Peter. I will go tomorrow," said Minnie.

"And tomorrow night," said Peter, "I will walk over to talk with old Jacob. It may be that he will take a little less and thus we shall get the poultry yard started the sooner."

Friday night Peter Kowalski came home as usual. There was nothing in his demeanor to suggest that he had murder in his heart or had for months past. He was just the same as ever.

He went about the work of the evening.

He chopped wood and took it upstairs. He fed Pil, still chained in his kennel. He helped Minnie pick grapes until it was dark.

"It may rain," said he, "and we shall both be busy over the end of the week with other matters."

It did not rain that evening, although it looked that way. The air grew warmer and the sky cleared. Overhead it was a soft, rainy blue tinge. The sunset left the west a smoky gold. In the dusk approaching the horizon became misty and silvery. The Hartnett house looked like a pale violet water-color drawn against an argent background.

"I think I will walk over and see Jacob Borse tonight," said Peter, "and make a last appeal to him."

"Are you not tired?" asked his wife.

"Not to do something that will please you and help us both," said he.

Hearing which, Mrs. John Hartnett shook her finger playfully at her husband.

"There is Polish gallantry for you. How chivalrous he is! Somebody ought to put him in a book."

"Uh! Huh!" grunted her husband, clenching his teeth over his pipe and perusing his evening paper. "I see the bob-haired bandit has held up another store."

"The very idea," gasped Mrs. Hartnett. "Did you intend that as a slam at me or the women in general?"

Mr. Hartnett did not reply.

"Good-by," called Peter Kowalski to his wife.

"Good-by," said Minnie from inside the house as he stepped out of the back door.

The Hartnetts both heard and saw him. They also saw him turn back. Peter intended that they should.

"Minnie, I've forgotten my tobacco box," said he. "Never mind, I think I left it in the cellar."

He entered the cellar by the outside door and stairway from the rear of the house. He came up.

"It isn't there. Look in the west room. I may have left it in my other clothes," said he.

He was clutching the axe behind him.

"I will," said Minnie.

Those were her last words. He struck her just after she passed. The cruel blade bit into her brain. She fell without a sound. He walked out of the back door whistling and went to Pil's kennel. He unfastened the chain, took the animal in his arms, lifted him over the fence thick with blackberry bushes and walked across the field with the dog frollicking along with him.

"She's gone," said he to the animal.

"Bow-wow," said Pil. Peter grinned and lighted his pipe.

CHAPTER FOUR

ENTER THE CONSTABLE

IT was all of three miles to Jacob Borse's farm. Peter Kowalski took his time. He was imperturbable. Also, vastly at peace with himself. He had the five thousand dollars in his pocket. It was in a brand new tobacco box, for he allowed himself this solitary luxury of a smoke of good tobacco after a hard day at the forge.

The old tobacco box, containing the new tobacco, was in his other coat pocket. Under pretence of screening his match from the wind, as he reached a knoll Peter turned and looked back at his house and that where the Hartnetts lived. Lights gleamed in both, for Minnie had lit a lamp in the kitchen ere he had killed her.

The Hartnetts suspected nothing. He was gratified and pushed on. He had to cross a little stream by a bridge. But he had long since reconnoitered another route which made it possible for him to also plan to hide this money.

After all, the money was not only the main thing—it was everything. So Peter Kowalski kept to the right instead of to the left when he came to the little creek. He leaped from stone to stone across it. He found the old elm tree, far up on the bank, easily. He thrust the box with the money beneath a sprawling root that was at least as old as he. He kicked the earth into place behind it and hurriedly sprinkled

twigs, leaves and dust over the hiding place. It was far above high water and the squirrels would not find the tin easy gnawing.

He kept on to Jacob Borse's farm. He spent a pleasant evening, drank cider with the family and broached the object of his call. Jacob was courteous, but stood fast for the five thousand dollars. So Peter, likewise courteous, arranged to meet him Saturday.

"Minnie has already drawn the money from the bank," said he, "and there will be no delay. She will be a little disappointed, but maybe we can make a loan at the bank and thus get the things we need for her squab farm."

Peter said good-night, filled and lighted his pipe and walked back homeward. When he was not smoking he was whistling and playing with Pil. He crossed the stream by the bridge on his return.

He went to the house. He entered by his key to the front door. Pil darted ahead of him and set up a mournful howl.

Five minutes later Peter Kowalski was pounding frantically on the window of the Hartnett bedroom, just as he had planned to do months before.

"Get help!" he screamed. "Somebody has murdered Minnie. Hurry, I must get back to the house. Mrs. Hartnett, will you and John come over before he goes for the constable? I want you to see what I saw and what little Pil saw when we got home. Oh, this is the most awful——"

He broke off and dashed like a madman back toward the house, the whining, yelping, howling dog his only companion.

Peter made his first test of his plan after Minnie's death when old Bob Swan, the constable of Downing Corners, came to the house.

"What's happened?" asked the constable.

Kowalski turned a face on him that was grim. His eyes blazed.

"Didn't Mr. Hartnett tell you what happened?" he demanded. "Go and look for yourself."

He was ferocious. It was part of his plan. The authorities would be baffled. He wanted them to regard him with suspicion. Then he would turn on them and denounce them to their faces for their inefficiency, their incapacity.

His grief made him seem a different man. A wild rage possessed him. He dropped into a chair; he sobbed; he groaned. His face was in his hands.

Bob Swan came back into the room where Mr. and Mrs. Hartnett were trying to comfort him. He looked at the blacksmith.

"Why would anybody want to kill your wife?" he asked.

Kowalski raised his tear-stained face.

"Robbery," said he.

"Of what?"

"Of every penny we had in the world. Go back in that room. Right on the table is her bag. She drew out five thousand dollars today from the bank. She brought it home. I went to see Jacob Borse tonight to get him to take a little less. Minnie—oh, poor Minnie."

He fell back into the chair, sobbing again wretchedly.

"What was it you was a-goin' to say?" asked Bob Swan, unemotionally.

"Minnie wanted to start a squab yard right away. It would take about five hundred dollars, we figured. I wanted Jake to take that much less. He wouldn't, and when I got back—there she was."

"Where did that axe come from?"

Kowalski did not answer at once. He got up, tottered to the door of the west room, looked at the haft of the weapon and then came back.

"It is my axe."

"When did you last see it?"

"Tonight, when I chopped the wood for the supper and breakfast fire. But it was in the cellar then."

"Humph," said Swan. He went down into the cellar. He inspected it thoroughly. It had a concrete floor. There were a few barrels and several bins containing fruit and vegetables. The potato bin was nearly full. But the dust on these had not been disturbed. Swan could see no signs of any intruder having hidden out there.

He went back upstairs.

"Did anybody but you know that your

wife had drawn out this money from the bank?" asked the constable.

"Nobody that I know of but the bank people that paid it to her."

"Had you or your wife told anybody you was goin' to draw out this money today?"

"I hadn't told anybody. I don't think Minnie had, but of course I don't know. We were to close up the deal with Jacob Borse tomorrow."

CHAPTER FIVE

KOWALSKI TURNS ACTOR

HIS replies came muffled from where he sat, with his face in his hands. Kowalski was shamming grief. He felt no remorse; he felt no fear of consequences. He was merely doing part of this old-fashioned, awkward, slow-moving constable's thinking for him. Kowalski had planned this very scene months before and thought it all out, even to the most minute detail of the dreadful glare he would give Bob Swan when arrested.

"I'm awful sorry, Pete," said Swan, clearing his throat, "but I guess I gotta ask you to go back to the village with me."

"And leave my wife?" Kowalski lifted his face a bit from his hands. His glaring eyes made the constable wince.

"Don't see how we c'n take *her* along," said Swan.

"Well, why take *me* along?" Kowalski shot over the question with a fury that made the Hartnetts stare. He was a different man, it seemed, since the horried moment his hoarse, frantic voice had called to them out of the brooding night. Grief and despair were responsible; for he was a good man, a loving husband.

"Well, Peter, I gotta take you along," said Swan.

"Why? Why don't you try to find some trace of who killed Minnie? That's just the way you mutts always act; arrest the first one you see. Never mind if they don't know how a death happened. They're handiest; and you fellows can't wait to find out who really did—a thing like that—for that would mean working. You can go to hell."

He buried his face in his hands again and sobbed bitterly.

The constable could hardly believe his ears.

"Waal, now, Peter," said he, "of course you're awful upset, 'n all that," said he. He was feeling his way carefully. This man was of foreign birth. He had sustained a great shock. But he was the last man seen alive with his wife and the first to find her dead. It was very suspicious.

"You heard me," reiterated Kowalski in muffled tones. "Go to hell. Do you think I care what you say or what you think or do—with her in there?"

He rose, fiercely, his gaunt face working convulsively. His flaming eyes and his clenched fists on hard, bony arms swinging like flails made him a demon. The constable quailed.

"Go with you, eh?" snarled Kowalski tigerishly. "Not alive, you dirty rum hound, you pal of bootleggers, you false alarm! I wouldn't leave my dead wife's body for an army. Do you understand? An army. Your duty, eh? Your duty be damned! If you had any idea of your duty you'd be looking for clues. You'd be hot after who killed Minnie. You rat! Do you think I'm frightened because you're fingering your gun? Pull it, if you dare. Pull it, and I'll shove it down your rotten throat—right here before my neighbors. I won't leave my dead wife. Do you hear? Not for you, nor for all the other counterfeit police officers this side of the same river my Minnie has crossed tonight—never! And now get out of my house with your polluted carcass, and stay out of it, or I'll throw you out."

His rage was superb. It was terrifying. Constable Bob Swan, who did like his "toddy," knew that Kowalski meant business.

He left. He went to the Hartnett house and telephoned for help. The sheriff came. With him were five other big huskies. Kowalski was kneeling by his wife when

they touched him on the shoulder. He looked up.

"What do you want?" said he.

"Peter, come down to Vronsburg," said Sheriff Smith. "The law wants you."

"You are wrong, sheriff. The law wants the man that did this." He pointed dramatically to the body. "Why don't you find him? Can't you leave a man alone with his grief? Don't rouse me; don't madden me. I've got enough to bear as it is; more than enough."

There was pathos as well as menace in his manner.

Sheriff Smith temporized.

"Well, when will you come down?" he asked.

"After the funeral," sobbed Kowalski.

"The coroner is coming. The funeral may be a week off, Peter. Brace up. Don't be a fool; don't be unmanly. You've got to come, you know. I've men enough here to take you."

Kowalski rose.

"Have you got men enough to find who killed that poor girl?" he frigidly inquired. "Because, if you have, you'd better be looking for whoever did it. You only think you've got men enough to lock me in jail for nothing. I'm not going to jail; I'm going to find who killed her, if you don't. Do you hear me?"

"Now, Pete——"

Kowalski knocked him down. He plucked his pistol from his pocket and whirled at bay, facing the deputies.

"And you, too, you hound!" said he scornfully. "You cowardly dogs! No, I won't disgrace my little dog by comparing you to Pil. Come here, Pil. If you could talk, you could tell 'em who killed Minnie, couldn't you? But you're only a dog. You're dumb. But you ain't so dumb as these two-legged hounds, with their badges and their heads with no brains in 'em. Not one man with a badge has made one effort to find who killed your mistress, Pil. You're only a dog, but you'd do better than that, if you could talk, wouldn't you?"

Pil barked his derision.

It was a weird scene. Kowalski wanted it weird. He had won his first point. The Hartnetts, the constable, the sheriff and the deputies would all be witnesses if he ever came to trial. He would make them tell this all to the jury. No jury on earth would believe he had killed Minnie.

His mood changed. He extended his hand to the still prostrate sheriff. He raised him to his feet.

He handed him his pistol. Then he stooped and kissed his dead wife and walked out with them. They were nonplussed, and well they might be.

CHAPTER SIX

THE "TARTAR" AT BAY.

OUTSIDE, Peter Kowalski jerked his hand free when Sheriff Smith tried to handcuff him.

"I'm going with you," said he, "but I'm going because I want to go, not because I have to go. You've got no warrant for my arrest. If you have, read it. If you haven't, make a legal arrest and charge me with murdering my own wife—right here and now, while my neighbors can hear it. Otherwise keep your filthy hands off me. And when we get to Vronsburg take me before a magistrate. I'm going to make you go the whole route with me since you refused to look for the murderer."

Sheriff Smith was not used to such behavior or such language. He resented both.

"Why, you know you killed her," he blazed angrily.

"Do you know it?" asked Kowalski, so quickly that Smith flushed. "If you did, you're in the right. If you didn't, you'll pay me for the injury, the detention, the dishonor you are heaping on me. Just remember that. And another thing: If you do know I killed my Minnie you're going to prove it the minute we get to Vronsburg. Get that idea in your head right now. If you don't know I killed her, you have no authority to arrest me. How do I know but what you killed her?"

The sheriff drew back in amazement. This was not the demeanor of a guilty man.

He had come out to aid old Bob Swan, but was already beginning to wish he hadn't.

The dog ran whining to Kowalski. He picked the animal up, ignoring the officers. He stepped over to Mrs. Hartnett.

"Will you look after Minnie's dog," he asked, "until I come home again? I won't be long. Just chain him in the kennel like Minnie did. Let him out at nights for a little romp. Give him some bones and water. Good-by, little Pil."

Sheriff Smith took Peter Kowalski straight to District Attorney Wayne's office in the courthouse. Mr. Wayne had already heard Bob Swan's story and was righteously wroth that Kowalski should have threatened an officer. The sheriff left. Wayne stared at the other man, who looked him square in the eye.

"What is this Constable Swan tells me?" he sternly asked.

"I was not present when you talked with that rummy," said Kowalski. "Why ask me what he told you, since you already know?"

The district attorney suddenly had a sense of futility. Kowalski's face was tear-stained. But he was over his first spasm of grief, cool, collected and well-poised, if not downright defiant. The district attorney had his battery of concealed dictographs turned on and every word of the interview was being recorded in another room by two expert court stenographers.

Still it was not an auspicious beginning. If Kowalski was guilty it would be difficult to prove it.

Kowalski waited. He had scored. This was one of the scenes which he had been unable to foresee. But he had met it, notwithstanding.

"When did you last see your wife alive?" asked Wayne.

"Last night."

"What time?"

"I did not note the time."

"So, you don't know the exact time?"

"If I had been planning to murder her I would have known it. A man and his wife who have lived together for years in love and friendship, do not run to the clock every minute to see what time it is—especially when they do not know they are parting for the last time," said Kowalski sarcastically.

Wayne's eyes opened in wonder. This man was right.

"You loved your wife?"

"Why do you ask?" retorted Kowalski.

"Why do you ask me why I ask?" retorted the district attorney.

"Because I had hoped you, the chief law officer of this county, might have some brains," said Kowalski, "some sense of what your duty was. I am undeceived. You are like the rest of them, the bootlegging constable and the brow-beating sheriff. You are not interested in finding out who killed my wife. You are a politician and interested in being re-elected to office again a month or two from now."

Wayne kept his temper with difficulty.

"Why do you say that?"

"Because it is true."

"And why is it true?"

Kowalski looked him straight in the eye.

"You know quite well or better than I. Or, if you do not, you should. A foul murder has been done. If you could convict any one—innocent or guilty—before election day, people would say: 'There is a man who is on the job. He does his duty.' And they would vote for you."

"Do you think I would knowingly convict any innocent man?" Wayne's voice rose.

"I do not think that you are interested in either innocence or guilt. You are a politician. I am a poor man. My wife and I have toiled for years. We saved enough to buy a farm. We were to pay for it today. She drew the money yesterday. She was murdered and robbed. That leaves me without a penny, for I told Bob Swan that last night. And he told you, didn't he? Therefore you know I have no money to hire a lawyer. That makes me an easy mark for your ambitions. Certainly you would convict me, innocent or guilty, if you could. Why not? You are a politician."

Wayne had a feeling that he had "caught a Tartar."

He was more right than he supposed.

Kowalski had thought this all out months before. And the scorn in his eyes for the man across the table for him deepened. Wayne was plainly "up in the air." He had not expected this sort of dictograph record.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RETAINING BRUCE CARVER, DETECTIVE.

"YOU are mistaken, Mr. Kowalski," said Wayne stiffly.

"I am quite sure I am right, Mr. District Attorney. The constable, the sheriff, the district attorney, are all cut from the same cloth—politics. This murder of my wife was a terrible deed. It is easier to accuse her husband, pounce upon him, drag him away from her dead body, frame him up, get a hand-picked jury and carefully avoid looking for the real murderer at all. Oh, much easier. For the real murderer is gone, with the money. He may be miles away. It would take time to get him. And election day is not two months away, is it?"

"I do not care to hear any more of that stuff," stormed Wayne.

"I do not blame you, Mr. District Attorney. I would not if I were in your place. You may proceed with your farce. Not one official of this county has yet made one intelligent effort to find out who killed my Minnie, including yourself. But politicians are not in office to solve crimes. They are content to draw salaries. They invade the constitutional rights of people."

"Who told you about them?" snapped Wayne.

"My teacher in the public schools of this city where I have lived and worked all of my life. But she didn't tell me they were a myth. Your behavior tells me that."

It was like rubbing salt in the raw wounds. Wayne was petrified. Kowalski went on:

"My little dog, Pil, if he could talk, could tell who murdered my Minnie."

"Was he at the house when you went to the Borse farm?"

"No, sir. He was with me. I took him along because he was tied up all day. We had to tie him up. He would bury bones in Minnie's onion bed."

Wayne's curiosity was piqued. Kowalski was a most extraordinary sort for a blacksmith. He wondered what he was driving at.

"If the dog was with you and you were at Jacob Borse's farm, how does the dog know more than you about who killed your wife?" he asked.

"Ah! Dogs cannot talk. But they have other senses. Last night, as little Pil and I crossed the bridge leading to the Borse farm, he suddenly began to howl. I did not know then what was happening. After I got home I remembered how Pil behaved. It was then that my Minnie was struck down and robbed. If little Pil could talk he could tell who did it, for he surely saw it then and there. Find the man who got that five thousand and you've got the man who murdered my wife."

District Attorney Wayne could not credit his ears. Kowalski's manner was so sincere that it was quite evident he believed that the dog had seen the murder scene.

Wayne asked a few more questions. Then he told Kowalski that there was one suspicious circumstance.

"The axe is yours?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"I have had the axe examined for fingerprints. Yours are on it. There are no others."

"Mine should be on it," said Kowalski imperturbably, "for I have chopped wood for my wife for five years with that same axe and carried it up to the stove, taken out the ashes, emptied the tubs after she washed the clothing and helped her dry the dishes. My fingerprints are everywhere around my house. Why should they not be? And, if some one saw my Minnie draw that money in the bank, or saw her leave the bank and followed her home and entered the house when I was gone and took my axe and killed her, could they not have worn gloves?"

This ended the examination. Wayne was baffled. He had nothing like evidence to connect the murder of Minnie Kowalski

with her husband. He sent him home. Meanwhile the coroner had come for the body.

Wayne got the stenographic record of the interview from the typists. He took the midnight train to New York. He sought out Bruce Carver, the famous private detective. Mr. Wayne had had one taste of Carver's thoroughness, his marvelous mind, and in one of the strangest cases that ever had come under his notice in the same county.*

"Detective Carver," said Wayne, "how can I find a murderer when only a dog, who cannot talk, knows his name?"

Bruce Carver grinned.

"Homicide cases are a little out of my line, Mr. Wayne. Who owns the dog? Who was murdered, when and where?"

Wayne told him what little he knew.

"Read that." He thrust the transcript of the interview with Kowalski before him.

Carver settled back in his easy-chair. He gave Wayne a cigar and lighted one himself. Then he read the stenographically reported chat.

"What do you make of it?" asked Wayne.

"It is quite out of the ordinary. The man is either as innocent as a babe unborn and therefore furious at the way he was treated, or he's as guilty as the blackest fiend in hell and defiant of all authority. He has one point in his favor. They arrested him—at least I infer the constable did—prematurely. And if he gets to a jury with that story there'll be more than a reasonable doubt in his favor."

"You are quite right, as usual, Detective Carver," said Wayne. "Now, I've got to find the murderer. I don't see a clue. The Hartnetts told the constable that Peter and Minnie lived amicably—he was a model husband. I want to retain you to find who killed that woman. Will you come?"

Carver picked up his engagement book. He conned it with care.

"I can spare you four days," said he; "but no more."

"Can you find the murderer in four days?"

"That depends upon the dog. If the dog will talk, I might."

"What in the world are you driving at, Carver?"

"The geese gabbled and saved Rome, we are told. Maybe little Pil will disclose who killed his mistress. It isn't yet clear in my mind, but it's worth trying."

CHAPTER EIGHT

"INTRODUCE ME, PLEASE!"

CARVER pressed a button. Michael Casey, his aid and servant, responded to the summons.

"Pack two bags, Clutch," said Carter, using the nickname he frequently applied. "We're going to Vronsburg. This is District Attorney Wayne. My assistant, Mr. Wayne—Michael, better known as Clutch Casey, for he's a whirlwind automobile driver."

En route by train Wayne said:

"Surely, Carver, you don't really think that the dog is a factor in solving this murder mystery?"

"I can't say. I'll let you know later. No use trying to discuss that until I've seen this little Pil. But Kowalski was either lying or he at least thought he was telling the truth when he said the dog behaved that way."

"He said the dog couldn't talk, or he would tell who did it," said Wayne. "Why, it's the most fantastic statement I ever heard from the lips of a man suspected of crime."

"Quite so," said Carver, "and that is why it is interesting. But, suppose it should turn out to be absolutely true? What then?"

"You are joking, Carver. It is too absurd to even consider."

"As legal evidence, yes, Mr. Wayne. As a clue to the perpetrator of a capital crime by no means absurd. As a side light on

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* For details see "Hounded," the feature detective story in "Mystery Magazine" for January 15, 1924, by the same author.

the mind of a suspected murderer it is a very important incident."

The district attorney seemed astonished.

"But how could you make the dog talk?" he demanded, almost querulously.

"I haven't seen little Pil yet," said Carver placidly. "Maybe I'll get Kowalski to introduce me to him. Why not? And as for making him talk, you remember the old adage, 'A bird that can sing and won't sing should be made to sing.' Apply that to this dog, little Pil. 'A dog that can talk and won't talk should be made to talk.'"

Wayne grinned wryly.

"If you can make the dog talk, I hope he isn't as impudent and defiant to you as his master was to me," said he. "Well, here's our station."

Carver went to work immediately after getting a room at the hotel. He first visited officials of the bank at which Minnie had drawn the money. He learned that she had taken fifty one-hundred-dollar bills, all new gold certificates.

"Did she say why?" he asked.

"Yes, she and her husband were going to buy a farm the next day."

"Why didn't she draw the money on Saturday instead of Friday?"

"She said," replied the clerk, "that Peter and she had talked that over. He said the bank was very busy Saturday morning. That is true."

Carver nodded and left. "But," he said to himself when outside, "it would enable Peter to bust his spouse in the head with an axe on Friday night, once they had the money in the house, and make away with it. He couldn't do that on Saturday quite so well, for then the deal would be ready to close with both of them in the village and opportunity would be lacking. I wonder if he is at his home?"

He found Clutch Casey at the hotel and gave him some instructions.

"Be sure and keep your hand on your gun," he warned. "This bird chased a constable out of his house and batted the sheriff in the jaw. He's hard. If he suspects you he may give you a rap, too."

"I'll be on me guard," said Clutch. "What time shall I go out to his house?"

"Come with me. I want to find out another thing," said Carver.

He went to the district attorney.

"What time did Mr. and Mrs. Hartnett see Kowalski leave his home?" asked Carver. Mr. Wayne didn't know. Hartnett was the manager of a hardware store in Vronsburg and Wayne sent to Downing Corners for the young man, as this was Sunday.

"It was about ten minutes to nine o'clock in the evening," said Hartnett, "daylight-saving time."

"How do you know?" asked Carver.

"Because Mrs. Hartnett and I retire about that time every night. We were going to bed when he left the yard, with the dog under his arm. There is a rail fence back of the lot and some berry bushes and a tangle of grass and he helped the dog over the fence."

"Thank you," said Carver, "that is all. Do not tell Mr. Kowalski that I am in town, nor any one else, please."

"I will not, sir." Hartnett left.

"I think I'll go out and meet the gentleman," said Carver. "I will introduce myself and tell him that I am going to try to make an intelligent effort, at the request of the district attorney, to find who killed his wife and recover that money. If he did it, he will be very glad to see me. Besides, I want to meet little Pil—the dog whom Kowalski says knows who did murder his Minnie."

Carver went to Downing Corners. He arrived about eight o'clock in the evening. Kowalski was home. Carver told him his name and mission. The Polish blacksmith was very civil.

"Come in," said he. "I'm glad Mr. Wayne is starting to do something besides browbeat and bully me."

"Did he do that?" asked Carver quickly.

"He intended to. I didn't give him a chance. Here it is two whole days after this killing—almost—and the authorities are just waking up. Why did they have to waste this time? The murderer has a long start."

"True," said Carver, "but between you,

and me and your dog we may catch him yet."

"The dog?" echoed Kowalski.

"Didn't you tell Mr. Wayne the dog could see who killed your wife?"

"Yes. But he can't talk."

"Let's see," smiled Carver amiably. "I like dogs and dogs like me. Maybe he will talk to me. Who knows?"

CHAPTER NINE

LITTLE PIL "TALKS"

KOWALSKI led the way to the kennel. Carver noted the dog was chained and that the kennel was back against the fence.

"Pil, this is Detective Bruce Carver," said his master.

The dog wagged his tail.

"See"—Carver's tone was triumphant—"I knew he'd talk to me. He's talking now."

Kowalski frowned.

"His tail." The detective pointed. "He's saying, 'I'm glad to meet you.' District Attorney Wayne was skeptical, too. But I know dogs. Shake hands, little Pil. Well, old fellow, you've had a sad loss. Your mistress is dead, eh?" He stooped down to take the dog's paw. "I suppose if you saw what happened to her that night, when you were so far away, that you can see her ghost, eh?"

He straightened up and turned to Kowalski.

"Did little Pil howl last night?" he asked seriously.

Kowalski looked both mystified and incredulous.

"I didn't hear him if he did," said he.

"Well, dogs that are as close to any one as this one was to your wife—according to your own account of it—always howl at the time the death occurred for several days," replied Carver gravely. "I have been told that on the highest scientific authority, although between you and me, I cannot credit it. That was why I asked you, Mr. Kowalski, if you heard him howl last night about the time his mistress died."

"But, my dear sir," said the blacksmith unctuously, "I don't know when she was killed, for I was——"

"The dog knows," said Carver, "for you told the district attorney about the way he behaved. Trust the dog, Mr. Kowalski. What time was it when he behaved that way out o nthe bridge when you were going to the Borse farm?"

"I had a watch with me, Mr. Carver, but I didn't think to look at it. I have no idea. But Mr. Borse will know what time I got to his house. If you wish to see him he will probably be able to tell you. I was about two miles from his house at the time. I guess it was about twenty-three or -four minutes before I arrived, for I am a brisk walker."

"I won't go to see Mr. Borse," said Carver, "because, you see, little Pil knows all about it. Don't you, old fellow?" He stooped down and patted his head. "He says, 'Yes.' You see, Mr. Kowalski, dogs talk a lot with their tails. Well, I'll talk to you again, Pil. You are the best clue so far that I've got."

They returned to the house. Carver consulted his watch.

"Eight-thirty," said he, replacing it. "Show me where you found your wife, Mr. Kowalski. How did she lie? And, if you don't mind, tell me for a few minutes some of the last things you talked about."

Kowalski led the way to the door of the west room. He pointed out where the body lay.

"I looked at her down at the morgue," said Carver, eyeing him keenly. "The axe struck her in the top of the head. The man that did that must have been about as tall as you—perhaps taller, or else he raised it with both hands high above his head to make sure he didn't miss—for it is a heavy axe and only a very strong man could wield it with one hand."

"I have been too dazed with the horror of it all," said the blacksmith, "to speculate on those things. They are for the authorities to ascertain."

"Right. And now tell me some of the last things you discussed with your wife."

"The very last thing was about getting

Mr. Borse to take less money for the place in the first payment so my wife and I could pay out about five hundred for the material to start a squab farm and poultry yard. See, here are the catalogues."

He handed them over. Carver studied them casually. As he lifted them he saw something else. It was a railway time-table. But as Kowalski was watching his every move like a cat does a mouse, Carver tossed the time-table aside and ruffled the catalogues of the poultry netting makers and lumber dealers and dealers in squabs and poultry.

"But couldn't you have found that out from Borse the next day?" he asked.

"Yes, Mr. Carver, but Minnie and I have worked so hard and waited so long for that little bit of money that we like to do things quickly. If Borse had agreed, Minnie and I would have ordered everything that night by mail—and sent the letters the day we bought the place. If you'd ever been poor and saved and struggled you'd know how we folks look at things."

It wasn't the best explanation in the world; in fact, it was quite lame. But Carver nodded.

"The murderer took all the money," said he.

"Every dime." Kowalski was emphatic. "I've got to go back to the factory and slave and work again at the forge." His tone was bitter.

"Maybe not," said Carver rising. "Well, I guess I'll go back to town. Not much I can do tonight around here. I may run out during the week and look around for clues. Tell your neighbors what I look like and say it is Detective Carver, and anything I do is all right, will you? I don't care to have any one else know I'm working. The sheriff don't know."

He went out the front way and stepped down the road. A fine rain was falling. Kowalski had barely let Carver out when a knock sounded on the back door. He went to it. A man wearing shabby nondescript clothes with shoes run down at the heel was standing there.

"Misther, fer the love of Mike, will ye be givin' a poor guy outa wor-rk a bite to eat 'nd a cup of tay? I'm afther walkin' twinty miles 'nd the last place I asked a woman set a big yaller dorg on me, bad cess to her."

"Why, of course. Come in."

Clutch Casey accepted the invitation. He limped and it was then that Kowalski saw the war medal on his tattered coat.

"I seen th' light in th' windy," said Clutch, "'nd I didn't see no wimmen around. So I made bold to knock. The wimmen don't loike me. I don't know why, fer, bedad, I niver hurted wan of thim in all me loife."

CHAPTER TEN

ON THE TICK OF THE CLOCK

IF Kowalski was suspicious he kept his suspicions to himself. The fellow was undeniably a tramp, but Kowalski wasn't to be caught off guard. He put the kettle on the stove. It was ten minutes to nine. He set out some dishes, the tea canister, some milk, some bread and butter and the sugar.

"Draw up a chair," said he, not unkindly. "You look quite fagged out."

"I'm a bit tired," said Clutch, spreading the butter lavishly on the slice of bread he was handling, "but I'm used to walkin'. I've been on the bum, more or less, since the war, and——"

He stooped, his face contorted in fear. He turned and looked at Kowalski, and trembled from head to foot.

"What's the matter?" frowned his would-be benefactor.

"I thought I heerd a groan, sor. A banshee!"

"Nonsense!"

"Ah! In the ould counthry I c'd show you mony of thim," said Clutch oracularly. "They do be walkin' of nights—— Hark! Saints save us—*what's that?*"

Keen, piercing, long-drawn and indescribably mournful, little Pil's terrible howl of anguish penetrated to the room.

Clutch Casey frantically "blessed" him-

self and sank on his knees. "The banshee!" he wailed. "I knew it. I've heerd thim afore! Somebody's dyin'."

At this instant the little ormolu clock in the west room chimed merrily the hour of nine.

Outside little Pil lifted up his voice in another heart-rending howl.

Clutch Casey grasped his tattered hat. He stood not or the order of his going, he went at once, and his dramatic exit was followed by his clattering feet as they pattered in the dust outside the Hartnett house as Clutch ran like a wild man toward the village of Downing Corners.

Through the open door of the kitchen through which Carver's assistant had fled the long pencil of light streamed out toward the barn, at one side of which was the dog's kennel.

Kowalski walked out of the door and down the beam of light like a man in a bad dream. Sweat broke out on his brow. Little Pil was not howling as he came to the kennel. He was whining as if in distress. He moaned and licked his master's hand. He fawned upon him as if in great fear.

All the dormant superstitions in the Pole thrilled him. Carver had said the dog would howl, according to scientific authority, at about the same time Minnie had died. Little Pil could not reckon time. That was what made his utterances border on the uncanny.

Had the dog really seen something?

Kowalski asked himself that question.

The tramp had evidently not seen the dog. Nor had little Pil barked when the tramp had come to the door as he usually did when strangers approached.

There was something very strange about that, too. Kowalski could not remain skeptical in the face of two or three circumstances, each of which corroborated the other.

"Why did that tramp say he thought he heard a groan?"

That question was a facer, coming so close before the terrible cry of distress from the dog. Little Pil still quivered. He had seen something, and the weary, travel-stained and ragged tramp had also heard something before Pil howled.

Carver had expressed disbelief in the tale of a dog's seeing a ghost. He had asked Kowalski if the dog had howled the night before. Kowalski was glad that Carver had gone.

Over the fence Mr. Hartnett shoved up a window and leaned out.

"Is anything wrong, Peter?" he asked, like a good neighbor.

"Pil was frightened at something." By an effort Kowalski kept his voice steady. "I came out to see what it was. Did you see any one here?"

"I heard some one running down the road as if he was the devil and somebody was after him with a bottle of holy water," chuckled Hartnett, who dearly loved a joke. "But I didn't hear anybody around the kennel. I guess little Pil must be mourning his mistress."

Kowalski here "took the bull by the horns."

"There was a gentleman out to see me this evening, a detective by the name of Carver," said he to Hartnett. "He told me that dogs howl for the dead about the hour they die. He said that scientists claimed that, but he had never heard it verified. He asked me if little Pil howled like that last night."

It was a new circumstance, but having started to play the game with outward candor, the murderer doggedly decided to see it through.

"I heard the dog howl after you came home Friday night," said Hartnett, "but I guess that was when you took him into the house."

"You are right," said Kowalski. "Well, he seems quiet now. I guess I'll go in and go to bed. I've got to go to work tomorrow. You see, I haven't a penny in the world. The murderer took every cent Minnie and I had saved."

"Well, Peter," genially returned Hartnett, "I'll lend you fifty dollars for a while if you're short. I ain't got much, but you're welcome to that. How you going to manage the funeral expenses?"

"The coroner is holding Minnie's body

pending an inquest," said Kowalski. "I've got to see an undertaker after I know when the inquest will be over."

"I liked the way you stood up to that sheriff," said Hartnett. "He was awful fresh. If they knew you like Mrs. Hartnett and I do, they'd get busy looking for other clues."

"Detective Carver is doing that," said Kowalski. "Well, I guess I'll go to bed."

About this time, or a little later, Detective Carver came to the same conclusion. He found District Attorney Wayne waiting up for him when he got back to the village.

"The dog is beginning to talk," said the detective.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

"PRESS STUFF" AND A FEW PLANS

DISTRICT ATTORNEY WAYNE stared at Carver.

"For the love of sanity," said he, irascibly, "quit harping on that dog. It is driveling nonsense, and you know it. Why do you say such things?"

"Upon my honor," said Carver, "it is the simple truth. Kowalski will tell you inside of a week—or I'm very much mistaken, and I rarely am mistaken—that the dog told the murderer's name!" He said it quite solemnly, but there was a twinkle in his eye. "I asked him to introduce little Pil to me," he added.

"You did?"

"Certainly. If Kowalski is innocent, what has he to fear from what little Pil might whisper in my ear?" Carver grinned, but Wayne was frowning testily.

"I don't understand it in the least."

"Neither does Kowalski. Innocent or guilty, he's wondering right now what it is all about. But he has no more idea than you why I insisted on being introduced to that dog nor discussing what he told you about the dog's seeing the crime. That buffaloed you. You admitted it to me. I have got Kowalski buffaloed. He won't admit it—not yet. But he will before the four days are up. Now, just quit worrying about this murder. It is a very simple case. With little Pil's help we'll get the fellow that did it and with the goods."

"You'll have to have more than a dog's testimony," snapped the worried District Attorney, "to make me believe it."

"If the dog points out the murderer the circumstance will probably be uncanny enough to make him confess the crime," said Carver equably. "Now, send Sheriff Smith over to my hotel, will you? I want to talk to him. And have him bring a map of the county, showing the different railroad lines."

"Do you think the murderer left by train?"

"That is something I am going to think about. Go home and get a good night's rest. By the way, call up the reporters and give them that part of your own interview with Kowalski where he told you the dog had seen the crime—out there on the bridge. Use the exact language that Kowalski used, and see that the reporters use it. Tell them that you have retained me and that I have had Kowalski introduce me to little Pil. Tell the reporters that I said Pil talked a little with me and that I'm going to see him again. It's good stuff."

Wayne shook his head despondently. Carver was mad! But he noted that the detective was blithe and good-humored as he left for the hotel. So he did as he was told and the next day the press of the county—and the New York newspapers as well—flamed with the headlines:

DOG HOLDS SECRET OF MURDERER'S NAME

Little Pil May Reveal It To Noted Detective And Capture Perpetrator of Foul Crime Against Blacksmith's Wife.

Bruce Carver Holds Conference With Canine.

Clutch Casey was at the hotel when Carver reached it.

"Well, it was a grand success, that idea of yourn," said he. "The dog come through

like a little major. I pulled the 'banshee' stuff and liked to lame meself hopelessly by me sprint down the road beyant, and afterward."

"Good work, Clutch. The murderer of Mrs. Minnie Kowalski ought to have heard little Pil howl unless he's a thousand miles away. The only bet we overlooked was having a wireless broadcasting outfit within range of the pup's voice so everybody could 'tune in' on it. You can go back to New York tomorrow. I won't need you any more. And you can go to bed now; I want to have a short confidential chat with the sheriff."

Sheriff Smith came, bringing the map. He explained what Carver wanted to know about railway lines. Carver gave him instructions. Smith nodded.

"You are sure he'll be on that train?" he asked.

"Absolutely," said Carver, "and what is more, he will have the money in a tin tobacco box. Arrest him; handcuff him; search him. There will be fifty one-hundred dollar gold certificates in the box, and the paying teller at the bank can probably identify the money. Have him look at it immediately after you lock up your prisoner."

Detective Carver went to bed. Next morning he went to the bolt and nut factory. Kowalski showed up for work at seven o'clock. Carver greeted him.

"I think I've got track of the chap that pulled this," he said confidentially. "I sent the sheriff out of town last night to get him. Don't pay any attention to this newspaper talk. I did that on purpose. You get me, I'm sure. But," he chuckled, "the District Attorney thinks I'm crazy. He won't think so when Sheriff Smith locks up the murderer. I think he'll be back by Wednesday or Thursday with him, if not before."

"I wish you'd tell my employer that," said Kowalski, very much relieved.

"Sure I will," said Carver, cheerily. "Take me to him and hear me."

Kowalski did. Carver repeated his statement word for word.

"I'm going out to your house," said the detective to Kowalski, "to clean up a few odds and ends—evidence, you know. Got to have it ready when the sheriff gets back. But I won't have to go inside at all. And I won't, so I don't need your key. I'll speak to Mrs. Hartnett before I go into the yard."

Carver left. Kowalski went to work as usual. At noon he told the men in the shop what Carver had said. They were one and all quite convinced of Kowalski's innocence, and knowing what Carver had done for Tommy Trevor in a tremendously difficult and desperate situation, they congratulated Minnie's husband on the District Attorney's choice of the famous detective.

Carver was working quite openly. He went to the home of the murdered woman just as he had said he would. He chatted with Mrs. Hartnett. He borrowed a saw. He told her he was arranging to "have little Pil talk some more." The good lady was very much interested and begged for details.

"All in good time," said the detective. "Just now I must keep a few things to myself. I have just told Minnie's husband that I sent Sheriff Smith out of town last night to apprehend his wife's murderer. The sheriff will get him. And he will get him with that money he stole, too!"

"Land alive!" Mrs. Hartnett's eyes bulged out. "You certainly are a wonderful man, Mr. Carver, if all you say comes true."

He waved the saw toward the kennel.

"I'm not nearly so wonderful as that dog," said he. "He's the most wonderful dog in the world, Mrs. Hartnett. Mr. Kowalski told the District Attorney something that the District Attorney didn't believe. But I told the District Attorney I believed it. And he said I was crazy. If you see Mr. Kowalski tonight when he gets home you can tell him I forgot to tell him that the District Attorney said I was crazy when I saw him at the shop this morning. But I'm not crazy. Neither is Mr. Kowalski."

He disappeared in the barn.

Mrs. Hartnett heard the sound of sawing later on. But she didn't think on that. She was thinking, instead, of her great joy when the cowardly and dastardly murderer

of her neighbor would be safely lodged in the county jail.

So was Detective Carver when he returned the saw.

CHAPTER TWELVE

"THE TAIL OF THE TALKING DOG!"

MONDAY night at exactly nine o'clock the long-drawn, lugubrious and heart-rending howl of little Pil almost made Mrs. Hartnett fall out of bed.

"Did you hear that, John?" she whispered sepulchrally.

"It was a fine imitation of Gabriel's last trump!" said her husband. "What in the devil ails that dog?"

"He's seein' poor Minnie's ghost!"

"Nonsense! Go to sleep!"

The dog's terrible cry again broke the stillness of the night. Then it settled into a more uncanny stillness. He moaned a bit and whined a bit. That was all.

Kowalski did not come out of the house that night.

The little ormolu clock on the mantel tinkled the fatal hour.

It was diabolical. The dog he had interposed with his weird story was doing something too fantastic for belief, yet too loudly for disbelief.

Kowalski did not get to sleep until nearly dawn. He rose with difficulty, poured himself some strong coffee and staggered off to work, after giving the fawning dog a pan of water and plenty of food.

He tottered at his work before the hot forge. Men whispered that he was breaking down. He wasn't, but he was tired from lack of sleep. He wanted to bring the dog into the house when he went home that evening, but he decided that if he howled inside he would keep on howling. So he left him tied as usual.

Tuesday night, as precisely as if he had an automatic chronometer touching off his vocal cords, little Pil emitted the same horrid howl of agony. Kowalski heard it. He had laid awake expecting to hear it.

"Damn that dog!" he muttered. "I ought to poison him. But I dare not. If I did they'd arrest me for Minnie's murder." He fell asleep, and was up in time to prepare his own breakfast and go to work. He felt better. The papers carried fresh headlines. Detective Carver predicted the arrest of the murderer by Sheriff Smith within forty-eight hours.

"He left town Sunday night," the sleuth told the reporters. "What about Kowalski? Why, sure, I visited him. He was most civil and helpful. Kowalski is right here in town working. He has to work. The robber took every dime he and his wife saved. Write your own ticket on him. No, I cannot reveal the murderer's name. Sheriff Smith will give it out when he has locked him up. I expect him back by Thursday, at the latest, as I only had four days to give to this case. Yes, I told Sheriff Smith where to go. He's traveling still. The murderer had a big start of the authorities. But you may say for me that he is definitely known."

Wednesday night, right on the dot, little Pil emitted the same nerve-racking, night-cracking howl.

Mrs. Hartnett sobbed. "Oh, dear! Will he keep it up forever?"

"Not after the murderer is caught. Go to sleep, Belle. Detective Carver said the sheriff would be in with him probably today. He is sure some detective, that bird."

Kowalski had his plans all laid. He was not suspected. He crept from the cellar shortly after midnight. He crawled like a snake through the grass and weeds in the back yard. He went on the opposite side of the barn from the kennel. He went through the rail fence where, three months before, he had made room for this identical flight. Even little Pil did not scent him. And no one else was around.

Far out into the field of pasture land beyond he crawled unseen by mortal eye. The air was like a sheet of glass, but only sleepy crickets heard his movements and they told no one, for no one was there to tell.

Dimmed as by a transparent shutter the starlight filtered down upon the creek. He crossed the stones like a fawn. He was safe

now, and he scooped up the tin box from beneath the tree with scarcely a pause. In the woods he opened it. The fifty one-hundred-dollar bills were intact. He kept in their friendly shelter. He knew this path. No one knew that he knew it. Five miles beyond it came out and in the hollow below was a little flag station.

The limited here took her last gulp of water before her sixty-mile non-stop flight to New York. It carried a day-coach. Passengers who got on here paid their fare in cash, for the station was not opened at night.

The train was on time. Kowalski waited until the fireman swung back the huge pipe and the locomotive had made its first faint, premonitory cough as the train started before he covered the fifteen feet where he stood behind the huge tree and seized the handrail to the smoker. Behind it were curtained Pulmans. He was on. He went within. He was safe.

Dawn was near. The conductor approached. He nodded affably.

"Where to, stranger?"

"New York," smirked Kowalski. He paid his fare in cash from his last week's wages at the bolt and nut factory. Then he leaned his head on his hand, with his elbow on the window-sill, and took a look through the glass at the gliding landscape. He felt a great relief. He had fooled them. They could never find him in New York. He had that all fixed, too, three months ago.

A stillness so keen that it seemed the crystallization of the train's speed hung over everything. High in the coming dawn one bright star still glittered. It was full of hope for Kowalski.

He dozed. He woke.

Something hard, cold, gripping, was biting into his wrist. Then it encircled the other. Sheriff Smith was smiling down at him.

"Good-morning, Kowalski. Well, you come through on schedule, just as Detective Carver told me you would Sunday night when I left town. I been ridin' this train every night expecting you. Yes, conductor, you can give the engineer the bell. I'll git off with my prisoner. I've got an auto waiting at Sherwood."

Kowalski was dumbfounded. The sheriff drew out the tobacco box and scrutinized the fifty bills.

"Nice of you to dig 'em up and bring 'em along," said he, as the screech of the brakes sounded slowing down the train's speed and the conductor opened the door and raised the platform for them to descend. "I wanted to shadder you and grab you when you dug it up, but Carver said it was wastin' time. He told me you'd get on this train. He said the dog told him that you killed yer wife. I suppose that's as big a lie as the bluff you put up when I tried to first 'rest you—eh?"

He dragged the Pole out to the platform.

"Watch yer step. The 'lectric chair's a lot better than being ground into sausage-meat under these big wheels. So-long, conductor. Thanks fer waking me up."

"I can't make head or tail of it at all," said District Attorney Wayne to Bruce Carver, after Kowalski was lodged in jail and his signed confession was in the hands of Sheriff Smith, who "toted" it over to the District Attorney, where Bruce Carver was placidly smoking.

"The tail is the best part of the tale," said Carver. "The dog talked, that's all, but not just as Kowalski figured he would. You see, I had Clutch Casey come out here to the house as a tramp and beg something to eat. That was a camouflage to let me go back and pet little Pil. That was why I wanted to be 'introduced to him,' so he wouldn't bark at me when I did come back.

"I had stuffed Kowalski so full that my prattle was running out of his ears about a dog's howling at the time the death happened. It was about nine o'clock, because he had to kill her before he left so he could hide the money. So while Clutch kept Kowalski busy I induced little Pil to talk—that is, to howl on schedule. Remember what I told you about a dog that wouldn't talk being made to talk?"

"Yes," said Wayne. "How did you make him howl?"

"With a pair of pliers. Here they are."

He displayed them. "Then I jumped the fence and beat it. Poor little Pil's inability to talk kept him from telling Kowalski the base way I had treated him," laughed Carver.

"I sawed a hole in the back of the kennel Monday night. I laid outside the fence, and at just nine o'clock I reached in and grabbed the tail with the pliers and gave it a hearty squeeze. I did this Tuesday night and Wednesday night. Then I came back to town. The press-stuff went over big—with Kowalski. He thought he was fooling me. I let him think so. Why not?"

"But how did you know he would take that train?"

"There was a time-table in the bunch of catalogues. I saw the time of that train underscored in pencil. The line doesn't run through Downing Corners or Vronsburg. But it was in the same direction—that little flag station—from the house that Kowalski had walked when he went to see Peter Borse to alibi the murder. Since he took the money with him, it was a lead-pipe cinch he hid that money somewhere where he could pick it up again on the getaway.

"The rest was a cinch. All the sheriff had to do was to ride on the train that made that flag-station stop in the night. For, of course, Kowalski would leave secretly. I made him leave Wednesday night, for he was beginning to believe that little Pil did see Minnie's ghost. He couldn't stand that awful howl. It was something fierce. And there's the tail of the talking dog. I'm going back to New York before I get arrested for cruelty to animals. Good-morning, Mr. District Attorney. I'll mail you my bill. Be good to little Pil. He's a wonder. The only dog in the world that ever caught a murderer that I know of! Anoint his tail for me and beg his pardon for my seeming cruelty. It was the only way to get the murderer!"

MYSTERY IN SEIZED VESSEL

THE Panaman steamship *Taboga,* which was captured recently by the coast guard cutter *Acushnet* and towed into Boston, was released on orders from Washington. The coast guard cutter *Mackinac* escorted the *Taboga* three miles to sea and turned her loose.

Although coast guardsmen had searched for the Taboga for months until the vessel became known up and down the coast as the "phantom rum runner," the seizure, made fifteen miles offshore near Block Island, was not in connection with a rum running charge. Federal officials said the *Acushnet* had orders direct from Washington to bring the *Taboga* in. It was explained that the vessel had changed from American to Panaman registry without authority.

Later it became known that a man sought in New York on a Federal indictment was on board the vessel. While the *Taboga* was in port a strong guard was maintained on her, but the identity of the person under surveillance was not disclosed and he sailed with the steamship. When seized the *Taboga* had 1,900 cases of beer and 220 cases of cordials on board, but the skipper, Capt. Hartman, explained that he had sold most of his cargo.

Available shipping records give the *Taboga*'s last port of call as Halifax, N. S., whence she cleared for Nassau, May 14.

The vessel, which is of 1,321 tons, has been reported frequently as a unit in rum rows off Martha's Vineyard and elsewhere in the last year.

After remaining tied up at New Bedford for four months she cleared from that port for Newport News in February, 1923, the clearance papers giving the name of a New York man as owner and her destination, after the Newport News call, as South America. When brought in here she carried a large crew, mostly German nationals, according to coast guard officials.

[This story was broadcast by WJZ]

The Swinging Shadow

By HAMILTON CRAIGIE

CHAPTER ONE

A LONG, high wall, grim, gray, forbidding, under the bleak sky of a mid-autumn afternoon, about and around it the abomination of desolation—sand and yet more sand, with, in the background, the silver-gray of the forest, and beyond that the sentinel mountains reaching into the blue.

Set in the angles of this wall there were towers, or rather huts, and into and through these, passing and re-passing in a grim, silent, interminable sentry-go, were men with rifles, the guardians of that which lay within; within their purview the long, gray buildings stretched, with, on the midmost, a high-towering stack—the siren—silent now, under the bleak sky, its shattering roar in abeyance against the time of need.

A monastery of the hopeless, brooding in a fastness that was in effect a tomb; a grim, gray fortress of the damned, set solitary in a wilderness not made by man, its name a hissing and a byword in dark corners and secret places: Danoscara—or, in the clipped argot of those who knew it best, "the Pen."

The sentry nearest the great gate had turned, rifle upon shoulder, for the swing backward along his beat, when, from the white ribbon of roadway leading into the north, there sounded abruptly the low drone of a motor, and a great gray car purred downward along the high wall to the gate.

The man at the wheel, in a light tan overcoat and soft, shapeless hat, killing his engine, brought the gray car to a stop. Climbing out from underneath the wheel, he stood a moment, then moved forward slowly to the gate.

From his fashionable hat, trousers creased to a knife-edge of perfection, blazing two-carat stone in his lustrous Batik cravat, to his glossy cordovan brogues, he might have passed for almost anything but what he was. And his air of languid indolence was admirably well done. But his face, hard-bitten, lean, dark, predatory, with the forward-thrusting tilt of the lean jaw, scarred and scabbed with late-healed cicatrices, and pocked blue with powder-burns, would not have been the sort of face, say, that you would have cared to come upon suddenly, unarmed, in a deserted street after midnight. Not an inviting face.

Passing inward through the gateway, however, the visitor grinned mirthlessly in answer to the abrupt challenge of the guard. His pass was in order; by virtue of it he would be allowed five minutes' conversation with Convict Number 736; there was nothing especially unusual in that. Under the hawk-like scrutiny of a prison keeper the conversation of the stranger with the pallid Number 736 was limited chiefly to the banalities of such an intercourse; the keeper, watching with a hard, appraising eye, saw nothing wrong; certainly, as he was able to testify later, there had been no swift transference of prohibited articles under the rose.

But in the infinitesimal split second that he had not been gazing at the visitor's face a secret message had been given and received. The keeper had no means of knowing that Number 736 was a lip-reader, although he knew well enough that his cell in cell-block No. 3 adjoined that of Number 738. So the visitor had his five minutes, departing without more ado; but as to Number 738—that was a different matter.

But three weeks in the past, on the day that most of the metropolitan newspapers

carried a double-column spread of his conviction and sentence, Allister McCandless, Number 738, alias the Gray Wolf, had begun the first day of it at hard labor, and hard labor, as it is generally understood, was extremely distasteful to the convict, who had been known as a gentleman-of-fortune, reaching the bad eminence of his estate as Prince of Plunder by the perversion of a mind that could, had he chosen, have brought him far. An honor man at the university, McCandless could have been anything he chose, and he had chosen the path which, clever as he was, had led him now to Danoscara and the grim fellowship that was within.

But the Gray Wolf was not yet done.

That evening, following the departure of the dark visitor to Convict Number 736, the guard, passing the cell of him who had been known as the Gray Wolf, now but just a number and nothing more, flashed in his light upon the white face of the sleeper, fathoms deep in dreams.

He passed—returned—again the light flashed down; then, himself white-faced, standing not upon the order of his going, he went away. While overhead the brazen tocsin of the great siren vibrated its message to the listening air: Prisoner Number 738, Allister McCandless, alias the Gray Wolf—between the nightfall and the night—was gone.

CHAPTER TWO

OLD Ezra Carmichael, justice of the peace, awoke, pad-padding to the window as the stuttering roar of a motor, driven at full speed, sounded abruptly in the country road.

Old Ezra was a sound sleeper, but the snoring thunder of the exhaust, bellowing upward along the night, had reached him, fathoms deep in dreams, even as, peering out the window, he saw the head-lights of a car topping the long rise to the west.

Then, even as he watched, it seemed to leap outward and away, soaring above the thank-you-ma'am at the turn, to straighten, with the thunder of its twelve roaring cylinders, eastward along the highway to the hills.

Its tail-light, like an inflamed and angry eye, had vanished up the long stretch of roadway even as he watched; old Ezra, leaning in the embrasure of the window, shook his head.

"'Nuther uv them pesky bootleggers, I swan t' man!" he muttered, half aloud. "'S got so a man cain't git his rightful rest nohow 'thouten ear-muffs. An' thet one, f'r a happenstance, was sure a-sailin'—yes, *sir!*"

The car had been doing an easy eighty; it had come and gone almost between two ticks of the watch.

But the trailing wake of its dust-cloud had scarce begun to settle, the choking stench of the gases to sift slowly on the night air, when in its wake there came from the far distance a mutter, a murmur, rising to a thunderous, long roar, as a second car, and it was doing a rising ninety, dropped like a thunderbolt from the long hill to the west, to disappear past the farmhouse, taking the turn in high, to disappear, as had the first, eastward along the roadway to the railroad and Canada, northeast-by-north.

It was a main-traveled highway for the rum-runners with a branch of the D. & H. running due north from Moores Junction, not three miles from the line. And from the farmhouse to the railroad station it was not more than five.

But in car number one, as it lurched and thundered along the high-crowned roadway to the east, there were, as it chanced, no secret compartments, cleverly hidden, for the quick stowage of contraband, above the line; the gas tank would be filled with gas, coming and going, and with nothing more. The driver, hard-bitten, with a lean, dark, predatory face, scarred and scabbed with late-healed cicatrices, and pocked blue with powder-burns, twisted abruptly in his seat. Lean fingers upon the bucking wheel, he snarled sidewise at his companion out of the corner of his mouth, in the prison twist:

"He's on our backs, Chief—th' dam' dick! Him an' that hell-roaring Moonbeam of Kiester Jack's! Kiester's a fool! I tell

him to leave the car at Cadyville—at Looie's —an' Harrison, the dam' dick, with the guards after us, hell-bent, sees it, adds up two an' two, knows Danoscara's not over five miles, leaves his old tin Lizzie in the road—an'—cops Jack's car!"

The answer was jerked from his companion above the roar and rumble of the exhaust:

"That'll do, Hinch. He put me in Danoscara and he'll send me back there for a seven, if he can—'four-years-nine' for good behavior, maybe, but—I'm not—going—back!" He gave a mirthless laugh.

Hunched in his seat, with his keen, strong, hawk-like face, with its twisted smile that was like a benediction reversed, plainly he was the brains and Hinch the tool. Breeding was in that face, but an infinite guile; so must Satan have looked, after the Fall. And Allister McCandless had been to the manner born before, as the Gray Wolf, he had turned his hand against every man's; now there would be no turning back.

Twisting sidewise in his seat, he gazed backward along the way which they had come, but the long white ribbon of the roadway showed empty of all life.

"Holding him!" he muttered; then, with his eye upon the forested tableland at their right, he spoke rapidly and sharp:

"Hinch, when I broke jail I did it for a purpose! Those stock certificates in the shack there on the mountain—I'm certain Harrison suspects! Now if he gets his hands on them it'll mean another stretch; that's one of the reasons why I dug my way out. And now—listen: When we come opposite the mountain you throttle down; I'll jump; then you give her all she's got! But first you be certain that Harrison's in sight; he'll follow you hell-bent, or I'm a moron, with attachments. But I'll beat him, if it's the last thing I ever do!"

He shivered in his heavy coat.

"Some one's walking over my grave—do you believe that, Hinch? Well, you've got it all. Now, when you slow down I'll jump and make for the shack and jump that fast freight at the station when she stops for water. Harrison'll think I'm with you—sure! And I'll meet you in Montreal."

It was a clever plan, and a simple one; it could not fail. With the Gray Wolf gone, Hinch, driving that car to the last limit of its speed, would leave it at the first convenient cover, taking to the woods; the operative had not seen him, knew nothing as to his part; it would be easy, he told himself, as, rounding a corner on two wheels, he slowed, throttling his engine down to a smooth, easy twenty; the great car appeared to crawl as McCandless, vaulting to the roadway, waved his hand.

In a moment he had disappeared in the dense underbrush as, coming on apace, all at once he heard it, the rocketing rush of the Moonbeam storming through the night.

He heard the car that he had just left leap forward like a sprinter upon the mark, the drumming thunder of its exhaust like the droning of machine-gun fire: sixty, seventy, eighty miles an hour, it roared onward and away. Then, as he went on up the mountain, he heard the pursuing car shiver abruptly to a grinding halt, saw, in a long shaft of radiance, its search-light waver, turn, sweep forward, to center upon the roadway just ahead; then, with a lurch, it had swept forward; the low drone of its motor rising and dying beyond the hills.

The Gray Wolf breathed deep, a quick, hissing inspiration. Harrison had gone on! His ruse had won. And then there came the flat crack of an automatic, like the breaking of a stick; a bullet sang past his ear even as the wind of its passing kissed his cheek, to drive into a tree-trunk at his right with a smacking thud.

CHAPTER THREE

McCANDLESS cursed once, a bitter, brooding malediction. His ruse had failed. The herring that he had laid across the detective's trail had not availed. But he clawed upward now doggedly, through the dim glooms of the trees, making what speed he might forward, along the narrow trail leading to the heights.

He knew the way; none better; possibly, if his luck held, he might yet, turning and

doubling on his trail, elude the hound who followed. But he could not afford delay, even in a matter of seconds; time pressed; that train at the railroad station over the hog-back was due in twenty minutes; there would not be another until three o'clock, and it was now past midnight.

But after that first shot there had come no further sign, no sound. The fugitive, toiling upon the upward way, had halted a split-second, his hand going to his gun, as, from far below, he heard all at once the crash of a heavy body and a thick oath.

For a moment he had been minded to devise an ambush, waiting, gun out, for the coming of his Nemesis, but he decided against it even as, his finger on the trigger, he had made a half turn, gazing downward over his shoulder into that impenetrable black well of soundless dark.

For his first shot, if he missed, would betray him, and he had no means of knowing whether or not the operative was alone. He would have shot the operative down with as little compunction as a man squeezes a mosquito between finger and thumb, but if he should kill him there might be others —and he must make that train. As it was, he would have just time enough to reach the shack, secure the incriminating certificates and, in a race with the racing seconds, descend the hog-back to the water-tank and the train.

Were he to halt now it would almost certainly sacrifice his chances of escape. He burst upward in a last scrambling rush, and —there was the shack.

A black blot of lesser shadow against the low-hung curtain of the dark it loomed, dark and silent, and somehow sinister, as the Gray Wolf, plunging across the clearing, had gained the door.

Once inside, working with the efficient speed of a precise, desperate haste, he wasted not a moment, for he had calculated everything beforehand; in his mind's-eye he had planned what he would do; but he must have light.

Jerking downward the heavy shade with one lightning movement, almost with the motion he had snapped on the light; Hinch, in the rôle of a sportsman, had seen to that; the current had been turned on the day prior to the jail-break.

It was the work of a moment to secure the certificates. He had thrust them into his pocket as, his hand, reaching for the light-bulb, froze suddenly in motion; a sudden, stealthy sound had reached him from the timber; a scurry, a rustle, and the pad-pad of running feet.

There came the long hoot of a locomotive from the hills as, the veins in his neck and temples gorged with the pressure, the Gray Wolf stiffened abruptly like a pointer at gaze. There was a chair sidewise to the long French window; opposite to the door by which he had entered there was another door—it gave upon the steep pitch slanting downward to the track. Harrison was coming; he was even now at hand; coming to bring him back to that living hell, a monastery of the hopeless, his living tomb set, desolate, apart in a wilderness for those within, distant from a civilization at the moment as remote as the moon. And he was not going back.

And then, at the moment of his greatest need, his enemy at the door, with the flying seconds a driving spur for haste and yet more haste, the Gray Wolf did a curious thing:

Calmly, deliberately, on his face that grim, brooding smile that was like a benediction reversed, he sat down in that chair.

CHAPTER FOUR

OPERATIVE HARRISON had halted in the shadow of a thick stand of second-growth spruce as the long window had sprung suddenly alight.

He was alone.

The operative knew well enough the calibre of the man whom he must face: remorseless, with the treacherous, cold cunning of the cornered grizzly, with a heart that was just a muscle and a brain warped and twisted with evil and the fruit of evil, not for nothing had Allister McCandless, gentleman-of-fortune, knight-errant in the highways and byways of Criminopolis, been nicknamed The Gray Wolf.

Bending forward now, the operative could see that lighted oblong of window; upon the shade, in sable silhouette, the seated figure of a man, rocking slowly back and forth.

The image was not clear; there were merely the head and shoulders; but it was McCandless right enough; the operative had seen him enter the shack that had been dark and silent to his coming; seen him snap on the light; but that had been at some little distance, of course. But downward to the flooring the image of that high chair was cut sharp.

It had been a matter of perhaps five seconds in all since the detective had reached the edge of the timber; now, gun out, he raced forward, his lips twisted in a silent, sardonic laugh.

CHAPTER FIVE

NUMBER 44, the combination perishable-and-livestock, routed through to Montreal over the Grand Trunk, stopped with a squealing of brakes at the water-tank under the hill.

A blast from the whistle, a single, premonitory cough from the exhaust, and the bobbing lantern of a brakeman rounded the corner of the caboose as the clank and rattle of the couplings echoed from car to car. The heavy train was moving now, picking up speed with every turn of the wheels, when, appearing from nowhere upon the right-of-way, a running figure had landed inboard between two freight-cars like a cat.

A moment he hung, as the long train gathered speed; then, even as he hung there between earth and heaven, a second figure, running with the train, had made a darting thrust; there came a wrench, a twist, a sudden, brief explosion of movement, and down on the cinders along the right-of-way they rolled, clear, as the heavy train roared past them and away.

There followed a brief, silent struggle; then with a heave, jerking his captive upward to his feet, the operative spoke:

"Clever, McCandless—but for one little thing—well, maybe two! In the first place, I'll admit that I'd have gone on after your car if it hadn't been for your stop-light; didn't think of that—ha? Well, there was no hill there, and there must have been some reason for your stopping her. I got out, saw your footprints—simple as A B C, because, McCandless, those prison brogues—you should have shucked 'em when you had the chance. Then—for two can play that game as well as one—I sent my driver on ahead. The rest——"

He paused. All this time he had been pushing his prisoner onward to the station and the lights. McCandless answered him with a snarl:

"You win, Harrison—now; why rub it in?"

But the operative went on unheeding:

"A brainy man like yourself, McCandless; a clever man, an *educated* man—after all, you'll find that there's no difference! Because crime doesn't pay—even a man with brains! But I must say that you were clever: that dummy in the chair—I'll admit that for a moment you had me going; and that stunt of the swinging light, to make that straight chair seem like a rocker on the shade—the swinging shadow—that was a clever stunt, I'll tell a man! I suppose you figured that it would give the added touch, besides hiding the fact that that dummy had no face! A blanket-roll—well, it sure did look like a man, even to the legs!

"And it would have given you just the time you needed if I'd fallen for it, and I'll admit that I'd have fallen for it but for one little thing—a small thing, but a big one, too, depending on how you *looked* at it; and if it had been any window but a French window it wouldn't have been there!"

He paused again, tightening his grip upon the manacles.

"You're a good showman, McCandless; you created an illusion that was perfect, *down to the ground,* except for that one little thing: a rocking-chair swinging with the swinging of that invisible light; a rocking-chair—yes—but a rocking-chair *without the rockers*! Now—march!"

And Allister McCandless, alias the Gray Wolf, head sunk on his chest, eyes straight before him, moved stiffly to obey.

The Ghosts of Alwyn Lodge

By JEAN ROSS

CHAPTER ONE

LOOKING back upon my terrifying experience at Alwyn Lodge, one thing that stands out is the prosaic way in which Sanford Wilson, my brother, acquired the place. For it came to him as a gift, a bonus from Machine Tools, Incorporated, for the successful manner in which he had secured for them some choice building lots adjoining their plant on the east shore of San Francisco Bay. These lots being part of the much-tangled Alwyn estate, it had been necessary to include in the purchase a tract of wild land and a long-abandoned hunting camp in the wilds of Mendocino County. This being of no use to the firm, and described by some one who professed to know as of no value, it had been turned over to Sanford for the nominal sum of one dollar. As Admission Day, the next holiday, approached, he decided to visit his possession, which he learned was located near the village of Alwyn Springs, wherever that was. I received an invitation to accompany him.

"Make ready for an early start in the morning, Jane. We'll take along a camping outfit, for I doubt if the cabin is habitable."

It proved to be a long, hard trip, for as we neared our destination we found the road completely torn up with road builders at work, compelling us to make tedious detours over wretched byways.

"It may be that the hunting-lodge will be worth a bit some day," was Sanford's hopeful prediction. "Alwyn Springs, I have learned, once bade fair to become a great health resort, but no railway being near, it was too inaccessible to be popular. With this new road going through, the automobile will change all that. Recently I heard that a syndicate which controls half a dozen health resorts had its eyes on the place."

In this mood of happy anticipation we came to Alwyn Springs, a hamlet set in a valley that was beautiful beyond description.

Hemmed in by noble forests of redwoods, it also had the attractions of a seaside resort, for it was close to the Pacific. A short distance below I could see a stretch of sandy beach, which curved away to the foot of rocky cliffs to north and south. Once the place were made accessible to the outside world, I could picture the hosts that would flock there.

The village itself was less inviting with its shabby, old-fashioned hotel, cheaply-built cottages on the verge of falling to pieces, and dilapidated Grecian temples marking the sites of the various springs, but I had come prepared for these. What gave me a feeling of distrust was the number of flashily-dressed people that were about. Properly the inhabitants should have been as shabby as their surroundings. Nor were these holiday trippers nor sun-browned folks from the neighboring ranches. Hard-faced men were these, who eyed us furtively, or stared with brazen insolence, as we halted to inquire our way to the lodge.

A man rose from the porch of the store that was also a post-office and approached to discover our wants. I hated him instantly, hated his too polite manner, and too cordial smirk. A veritable sneak of a man, one whom it would be well to watch, was my unspoken verdict. But he gave us the necessary directions. Alwyn Lodge was near; just drive down to the beach, then

take the curving drive to the right, and we could not miss the place.

Nor did we. A few minutes later, as our car made the stiff ascent of the curving drive, we came to a weather-beaten sign: "Alwyn Lodge." And then we saw the place itself, and stared bewildered. Perched high at the very edge of the cliffs was a mansion, if that term may be applied to a glorified log-cabin. Two stories in height, with an attic above, except for the basement of rough stone, the lodge was built of logs, trimly dressed and joined. No crude affair this, but the sort of rustic camp which a comfort-loving rich man builds, when he wishes to sojourn in the wilds. And though close to a village, it had an appearance of being isolated, for the woods began almost at the edge of the broad lawn that surrounded the lodge on all except the seaward sides.

Yet the house was repellent, though that might have been due to the many signs of abandonment and the closely boarded windows. Despite its unkemptness, the cabin was not ruinous. It had been solidly built, and as far as the casual eye could judge, was still wind and weather tight. But I had no time for further reflection, for Sanford spoke:

"There's some mistake. This is no cabin to be given away for a song."

Common sense told me that he was right.

"Let's look around a bit. Perhaps there's a caretaker's cottage near by, and that is what you own."

But a thorough search disclosed no such building. Save for the big cabin there was no other structure except a stable built upon a lower terrace, and half hidden from the house by the retaining wall against which it stood.

"I'll drive back to the village and make further inquiries," was Sanford's next word.

"First unload our provisions," I suggested. "Here's a dandy place to camp, and I'll have luncheon ready by the time you are back."

Selecting a spot where an outcropping of the ledge made for safety, I kindled a fire of dried twigs. And all the while I was tending the coffee-pot and cooking the bacon I was haunted by a feeling that eyes were watching me from that grim old house. Again and again I found myself casting furtive glances behind me, or scanning the blind windows, seeking a knothole that might be filled with a curious eye. Or else I was staring upward at the gable windows, which alone of all on the landward side had been left unprotected by boarding. Was there a movement behind the one that faced directly toward me? Only a tattered curtain flapping in the wind was what I decided after a sharper scrutiny. Yet the thought of unseen watchers persisted, even after the return of Sanford, who had learned much in the brief time he had been gone.

"It's the place, all right. I showed my deed to Ketler—the man we talked with—and there's no mistake. This is Alwyn Lodge beyond a doubt, and there is no other."

"Then what's wrong with it?" I asked dubiously.

"Everything, if there's a word of truth in what that man says. It's been a white elephant to the heir that owned it. Couldn't sell it to a rich party, as it was too far out of the way. Poorer folks wouldn't look at it, either, because the upkeep would be too much. Couldn't even rent it, after a few tenants had been chased out by spooks."

"Spooks!" I gasped.

"Yes, it's supposed to be haunted. Old Tom Alwyn, who built it, was murdered here, his wife died mysteriously, a daughter broke her neck, and a Chinese cook had his throat cut. There were some other fatalities, but I didn't stop to get all the particulars."

Sanford laughed as at a good joke, for never was there a man so free from all superstition as he, and I have prided myself on a like freedom. From earliest youth our hard-headed parents impressed upon us that even the most weird incident could be explained; that behind all strange manifestations there was a human agency, or some prosaic law of nature, though possibly one not yet understood. Mental illusions accounted for all else. And seeing that neither

of us had met with uncanny experiences, this creed had become an established part of our belief. Yet I could understand how more credulous folks had come to regard the cabin as something to be rid of, no matter how great the financial loss.

"What will you ever do with the place?" was my next question.

Sanford had no reply ready. He knew, as well as I, that his means would never stand the upkeep of such a place, nor was it likely that he could find a purchaser, seeing that the Alwyn heirs had failed.

"Anyway, we'll take a look inside as soon as we have eaten. Ketler has been a sort of carekeeper, and he gave me the keys. He said the place was furnished, and not in bad shape, either."

It was true, as we could see when Sanford threw open the stout plank door. A broad entrance hall confronted us, one that suggested the rustic lobby of some wilderness hotel. Yet the furnishings were ill-chosen. There was too much thick carpeting on floor and stairway, too much velvet upholstery everywhere to be in keeping with the rustic effect of walls and ceiling. To left and right wide double doors led from the hall. Those at the left were open, and I entered nervously at the sight of ghostly white shapes in the dimness of the big living-room, which was unlighted except by the doorway behind us. Force of habit led my finger to an electric switch on the wall, for no luxury had been omitted by the former owners. Instantly the decrepit globes sprang into light, and my ghosts were revealed as upholstered chairs covered with moth-proof sheeting.

"How strange that the electricity should be turned on," was my spoken word.

"Ketler said something about his using the basement for storage. Probably that accounts for it. He said also that the water was kept on as a protection against fire."

"Everything is ready to move in, it would seem."

"If it were the beginning instead of the end of summer, I'd take you at your word," was Sanford's half-joked answer. "I always did want to spend a vacation at a swell country place."

As he spoke he opened the doors to the right of the hall. A ball-room was before us. The seaward windows had been left unboarded, and all was light and cheery. Here again were the decorations in shocking bad taste, and I longed for the privilege of setting things right. For before I had left the East to make my home with Sanford in California I had been a decorator of no little reputation. Sanford saw my awakened interest, and surprised me with a proposition.

"What do you say to doing the whole thing over? Ghosts or no ghosts, once this place is fitted up, it will sell for something just as soon as the new road is finished, especially if the syndicate takes over the Springs. I've a bit of money I'm willing to gamble, so if you feel like expending your talent on the place, go to it."

And in this prosaic way began those awful experiences whose memory, even after the lapse of many months, still causes me to shudder.

CHAPTER TWO

QUICKLY were my plans made. I would not return to the city with Sanford, but stay on at the Lodge. I had my suitcase filled with garments suitable for camping or rough usage. Blankets I would take from the car. The store in the village would furnish provisions, and whatever else I needed. Thus would I have ample time for planning, and if help could be secured locally, give the place a thorough cleaning.

Immediately we set to work to make a few rooms habitable. With a tool from the car Sanford pried away the boards that covered the windows, and for the first time I realized the enormity of the task before me. Not a room of that cabin was fit for occupancy, but by dint of hard work we succeeded before nightfall in putting the kitchen and breakfast-room adjoining into a fairly good condition. But we spent the night in the open in preference to the musty bedrooms, I occupying the tonneau of the car and Sanford in the auto tent close by.

But I slept little. There were too many

prowlers about, or so I imagined. Again and again I rose up listening to the sound of stealthy footsteps, whether of man or beast I could not determine. More than once I peered out through the windows of the side curtains, but a fog had rolled in from the sea and nothing was distinct. Once I could have sworn that a flash of light in my face had aroused me from a fitful doze, but it was gone before I was fully awake, so I refrained from calling Sanford, who snored away in blissful unconsciousness. And the thought that the grim old cabin had some connection with these disturbances persisted in spite of my efforts to banish it.

The dawn of a bright sun drove away these fears born of the darkness. Even the old lodge, now that its windows had been laid bare, was distinctly inviting. But Sanford was worried.

"Are you sure, Joan, that you're not afraid to stay here alone? I'm not thinking of ghosts—that is nonsense, of course—but of the folks down in the village. They struck me as a tough bunch, and I don't like that storekeeper. A queer thing happened yesterday when I went down to make inquiries. I asked Ketler where the Wire Staple Company was located. Our firm shipped them a die press a year or so ago, and I thought I'd make them a call. That storekeeper vowed he never heard of the company, but I know he was lying."

"Perhaps he's one of the firm, and was afraid you had come to collect a bill," I suggested, and dropped the subject, though I was to recall the incident later.

I rode with Sanford as far as the village, for I had purchases to make, soaps and scrub-brushes, and all else needed for the task before me. These I readily secured, but when I spoke to Ketler of helpers, he assured me that he knew of no one. And from all the crowd of loafers about the store I heard surprised comment that I should dare to stay alone in that ill-omened cabin. One young man, whom I distrusted at first sight, was insistent that something would surely happen to me if I spent a night there. I paid him scant heed, for though his speech was courteous, and showed traces of culture, I instinctively felt that he was one to be avoided. I was relieved when he went away leaving me alone with Ketler, who added his bit of warning:

"It might be wise to take that man's advice. He's Tom Alwyn, a grandson of old Tom, who built the lodge, and he knows what he's talking about. He's the last of the name, though there's an aunt in Europe, the one who owned the property up to now. Five members of the family met their death in that house. Perhaps that does not mean anything, still it might. And other folks connected with the family died, too."

But I had had enough. If the past Alwyns had been like the one I had seen they had been persons of shady character, with doubtless many an enemy to reckon with.

"Can you send my things right up?" I asked abruptly.

"Yes, I'll call the boy now."

Accompanied by the store boy I returned to the lodge, following a short cut which my companion showed me. By this path it was but a step to the top of the cliff, a series of steps, rather, for rough stairways of cemented stones formed its major portion. My guide deposited my bundles on the doorstep and retreated as hastily as though he feared the ghosts of the place walked in broad daylight.

Not at once did I begin my task. There were too many mysterious nooks and corners to be explored. Whoever had closed the house had put everything away with care. From closets and wardrobes I dragged forth expensive rugs, bedding and blankets, each protected from moths by careful wrapping, and needing only a bit of airing to be ready for use. There was no linen or silver, and the china was limited to a few chipped pieces, but otherwise the furnishings were complete, though all of a bygone age. I wondered that local thieves had not looted the place, but perhaps its sinister reputation, together with the double locks and bolts on all outside doors, had been a safeguard. Those locks in themselves were a reassurance. Surely with such stout barriers to protect me I need fear no intruders.

But I would scarcely have been so confident had I known that locks were as naught to the terror that nightly stalked those deserted rooms.

CHAPTER THREE

"WHEN cleaning house begin at the top."

Obedient to this ancient rule, I ascended to the upper floor, but if the attic be considered the top, I did not begin there. When I located the boxed-in stairway that presumably led upward, I found the door locked, and none of the keys in my possession would open it. But it was a matter of slight consequence. There was plenty for me to do elsewhere; the attic could wait.

There was one chamber that delighted me. Though situated at the rear of the house, it was a room fitted to be the owner's or that of an honored guest. The windows commanded a wide view of the sea, and all was bright with the afternoon sun, for I had idled away the better part of the day. This room, I decided, should be mine while I stayed at the lodge, and with joy I noted that it could be put into a comfortable condition with little labor.

Soon I had the carpet up and bundled into the corridor outside. The walls were paneled for half their height, but the paper on the plaster above had been loosened by time and dampness and hung in strips. Down it came together with the faded draperies. As I was gathering up the litter I became conscious of a watcher. Turning, I saw Ketler in the doorway. The look I surprised on his face was hard to read. It held something of sadness, something of horror, something also of cruel satisfaction.

"I brought up the rest of your things, Miss Wilson. You didn't hear my knock, so as the door was open, I walked in."

I was annoyed, though really there was no cause for anger. I could not even accuse him of sneaking upon me, for the thick padding of the stairway would have deadened any footsteps. Still he might have called out. If he noticed my annoyance he paid no heed, but seated himself in a chair by the doorway.

"I take it you're fixing up this room for yourself?"

"Yes, I intend to sleep here tonight. It's the pleasantest room in the house, and the cleanest," I answered shortly, for his inquisitiveness was getting upon my nerves.

I expected him to launch into a recital of the gruesome things that had happened in the room, nor was I disappointed. This was the very chamber in which the first Alwyn had been murdered, though he admitted that I need not condemn it on that account, for some sort of tragedy had visited every portion of the house. In one of the front chambers the wife of the murdered Alwyn had died of poison, so it was suspected. A guest had committed suicide in another bedroom. At the foot of the staircase a daughter of the house had been found with a broken neck, and again there was talk of foul play. The living-room had been the scene of a drunken brawl ending in the death of two men, one an Alwyn.

The kitchen and the ball-room had had their fatalities. Not even the basement was exempt. Here the tragedy had been of a more recent date. A year ago a group of young people had secured the privilege of using the ball-room for their weekly dances. On one occasion some one had suggested a ghost hunt. In the midst of the merriment a scream was heard from the basement, and when the others gathered courage to investigate pretty Alice Maynard had been found at the foot of the stairs with a crushed skull. Had she fallen or been struck down? Medical opinion had differed, and the question had never been answered.

Nor was that the only tragedy of recent years. A tramp who had sought shelter in the stable had been found dead, likewise with a crushed skull. Some comrade of the road might have done the deed—such acts are common among the fraternity—but it had added another black mark to the record of the haunted cabin. Almost it seemed that were the ghosts of the dead to revisit the scene of their dissolution one might expect to meet a ghastly specter in almost any corner of the house.

Ketler's remarks took a new direction.

"While you are cleaning up you might keep an eye out for the dagger that killed Tom Alwyn. As I said, he was found murdered here with the door locked fast and the key on the inner side, too. At least that is what I've been told, for it happened before my day. But it was murder fast enough, though how the slayer got in was an unsolved mystery. When the servants broke in they found him lying in bed with a dagger in his heart. It was a peculiar sort of a knife with a filigree handle. But before the inquest was held it disappeared, probably stolen by some one who feared it could be traced back to its owner."

"But why should it be hidden in the house? More likely the thief threw it over the cliff into the sea."

"It would seem so were it not that the dagger, or its ghost, has been seen about the place."

"The ghost of a dagger! I never heard of such a thing!"

"Neither did I till I came to the Springs, and then I heard aplenty, believe me. Tales of the shadow appearing on the walls of the room, and Jake Dow, a logger from the camps up north, swore he saw it. After getting half full of moonshine he bragged around that he was going to sleep in Tom Alwyn's bed, ghost or no ghost. A whole crowd of young fellows came up here to see that he got into the right room, and then went off and left him. Along about midnight the whole village was waked up by the awfulest yelling you ever heard. A minute later Jake came down the terrace stairs taking the steps six at a leap, and screeching like a hundred wildcats rolled into one. When he got calmed down a bit he said he had waked up sudden and seen a hand holding a dagger between him and the light of the window. He didn't stop for a second look, but jumped out of bed and beat it. Of course the yarn kept getting bigger and bigger every time Jake told it, but that's way way it was at first."

"Too much booze, and too much imagination," I scoffed.

"I reckon you're right, but remember that imagination has scared folks to death. You had better take my advice and not sleep in the house."

But I did not listen, nor did I carry out my intention of occupying the chamber I had selected. The room was large and I had started work at a late hour, and Ketler's visit had delayed me. Darkness came before I had finished. And the bedding that I hauled forth from a closet was musty. It was better, I decided, to use the blankets I had taken from the car, and sleep upon the cot which Sanford had set up in the breakfast-room.

Scarcely had my head touched the pillow when I was asleep, so exhausted was I from my unusual labors and the broken rest of the night before. It was hours later when I found myself sitting up in bed listening with a quivering intensity for I knew not what. Then I heard it—the sound of creaking boards, of feet ascending a stairway.

But the stairway? Not the front one, for that was too thickly carpeted for footfalls to be audible. But there were the back stairs leading up from the narrow service hall, upon which one door of the breakfast-room opened. Another flight descended from that same passage to the basement. Before I had located the sounds they ceased, to be followed by others like those of a person walking across a room above—the one I had been cleaning, for the others still had their carpets down on the floor.

Then, half fainting, I sank back upon my cot as a horrifying scream pierced the silence. Like a timid child I dragged the heavy blankets up over my head, striving to muffle my hearing as that awful shriek was repeated. A moment of silence, and again I was sitting erect listening. I had to listen, whether I would or not, so all compelling was the spell of dread. Then I heard the footsteps returning, descending the stairs, not stealthily as before, but with a careless haste. Too weak with fear to move, through the open door of my room I stared out into the passage, expecting to see the door of the enclosed staircase open and something or some one emerge. But abruptly the sounds ceased, or rather grew faint,

tapering away to silence, and I had seen nothing.

Shivering, trembling, for hours I strove to regain my self-control. Surely my imagination had been playing tricks, that was all. That scream came from some prowling house-cat, or possibly a wildcat. The woods were close, and the bob-tails had a fancy for occupying deserted cabins. Rats had been responsible for the other sounds. No rats in an abandoned building? Ketler had been using the basement for storage; there would be bits of food among his boxes and bales, enough to attract rats and mice. Yet not till dawn showed red in the east was I able to calm myself sufficiently to drop again into slumber.

Morning was well advanced when next I woke, and once again the bright sunshine banished all fears that the night had brought. And so with a mind at rest, as soon as breakfast was out of the way, I tore open a package of soap powder and ascended to the room which I had left unfinished. Scarcely had I set foot through the doorway when I reeled, half fainting, with the sickness or horror, while from my nerveless hands fell the package I carried. Beneath the blankets of the old-fashioned bed lay the likeness of a human form, and thrust into the breast was a dagger, a dagger with an ornate handle of filigree!

How I threw off the clouds of blackness that were closing in upon my senses I do not know, but with a mighty effort I steadied myself, and forced my eyes to look again at that shrouded form, to advance nearer for a close inspection. With a relief too great to describe I perceived that it was no human form beneath the tumbled blankets, but a cylindrical bolster, or pillow holder, of thin wood, such as was formerly in vogue. By chance this object had been placed lengthwise of the bed, and under the blankets I had piled there, it had the appearance of a person asleep.

But the dagger was real, beyond question, and a horrible realization came to me. The sounds I had heard in the night had been real also. Some one or something had sought my death, and only by chance had I escaped!

Who had thus plotted against me? And why? I had no enemies. A few people there might be who disliked me, but that was all. And on this western coast, where I had few acquaintances, there should not be even these. Certainly not in Alwyn Springs, a place I had never seen till a few hours previous. Such were the thoughts that poured through my mind as I fled in panic down the staircase. Without pausing for hat or coat, I rushed out of the cabin and down the terrace steps to the village. I would find an officer of the law and report the attempted murder.

In that Ketler was the only one with whom I could call myself acquainted, my first thought was to seek his counsel. But some inner caution prompted me to check my place and compose my manner before I reached his store. Next in order came a decision not to speak to him of what had happened, but if possible find some other excuse for seeking a peace officer.

I have seen astonishment in the faces of those who received startling news, but never have I beheld such amazement as I saw upon Ketler's face as he looked up at my entrance. Hearing a stiffled gasp beside me, I turned to see Alwyn with a like expression upon his face. I divined the truth. These men had believed me dead!

Instead of further alarming me the knowledge steadied me. My enemies were creatures of flesh and blood, not disembodied spirits. Even as that thought came another supplanted it. Were these men my enemies? It their faces I could read something besides surprise, something that might be called relief. They were glad I was alive! Was their superstition so great that they had taken my death as a matter of course? Even so, would their emotion at my escape have been so great? Suddenly I knew that they were afraid, terribly afraid, but of what? Of me, or rather, of what I might have discovered?

"Good-morning, Mr. Ketler," I said with assumed cheerfulness. I am no clever actress, but the men were too perturbed to notice anything amiss. "I'll have a pound of tea."

(*Concluded in our next issue.*)

Life in Dead Ashes

By JOE BURKE

CHAPTER ONE

RODGER CARTRIGHT ran lightly up the steps and pressed the bell-button. Tapping his cane impatiently on the granite stoop, his eyes wandered over the massive oak door which fronted him.

His thoughts were stilled for the time by the door swinging open. A trim, white-capped maid bowed and stepped aside.

"The doctor is busy, Mr. Cartright," said the girl respectfully, closing the door and relieving him of his top-coat, hat and cane, "but there is only one patient in his office, so you'll not be obliged to wait long."

Cartright bowed his thanks and walked slowly into the spacious reception-room.

There he stood before the blazing logs on the hearth. Whatever his thoughts, they were not pleasant, evidently, for he cursed aloud at a flying spark which found its mark on his trousers leg.

Turning from the fire, he strode across the room. Before a costly framed painting which embellished the wall he stopped and looked up. It was the face of a woman that Rodger Cartright looked upon, a face that smiled from the canvas; a visage of one who in life, when she posed for the artist's brush, was beautiful. But she of the painting was dead.

The cold, lifeless eyes of the waiting man were now softening, and the hard lines in his face relaxed.

"Beatrice," he mumbled brokenly, his mouth twitching, "if you only had chosen."

The door of the room adjoining was pushed open and a man walked out and left the house.

Rodger Cartright strode to the door, on which was inscribed the word "office." He raised his hand to knock, then lowered it. Squaring his narrow shoulders, he turned the knob and swung the door in noiselessly. Then he paused and stared. A smile wreathed his dark, pinched features as he carefully and just as noiselessly withdrew. It was not an amiable smile, but a smile of fiendish triumph.

"So," Rodger Cartright ruminated, lowering himself into a chair near at hand, "the eminent Doctor Ayers has resorted to that. I wonder what his wealthy patients would say if they knew their worthy practitioner was a dope fiend?"

His soliloquy was interrupted by the trim, white-capped maid.

"Doctor Ayers will see you now, Mr. Cartright," she made known, throwing open the office door for him to enter.

The doctor was drying his hands on a towel when Cartright walked in. His face was flushed, his eyes were glowing.

"Hello, Rodger!" he greeted, casting the towel from him and extending his hand. "Glad to see you. How're you feeling?"

It was a strong grip that held the doctor's hand vise-like. There was fervor in the grasp; zeal—not of friendship—the exhilaration of victory.

"I'm feeling much better since I've seen you," Cartright answered significantly, disengaging his hand. "And I think I'll discontinue your treatment. You're not looking any too spruce yourself, Jim; you're working too hard."

"I'll agree with you there, Rodger," said Ayers wistfully. "I have been working hard of late, and I can't seem to reconcile myself to the loss of my wife. Beatrice was everything to me. She was my life, my all! You loved her, too, Rodger; and although I won her, we have never ceased to be friends."

Rodger Cartright was looking every-

where but at the grief-stricken doctor. His swarthy face was distorted with hatred. His fingers opened and closed spasmodically. His whole frame shook with passion. Oh, yes—he had loved her! He had worshipped her with a selfish love!

Doctor Ayers and Rodger Cartright had been friends since childhood. At a college function they met and loved Beatrice Ryder. Gay, debonair Rodger Cartright made ardent love to the girl, and lost. Studious, solemn James Ayers, abashed and stuttering, confessed his love, and won.

Thus the lives of these three mortals changed. The girl, happy in her choice; her husband, overjoyed with his gift from God; the loser, sullen and bitter, vowed revenge. The suitors shook hands, declaring eternal friendship.

Now Rodger Cartright recovered his composure, smiled grimly, walked to the window.

"Yes," he said in a tone hardly audible, "I did love her. But that's not here nor there, Jim. You've always been a glutton for work. You'll go to pieces if you don't take a rest. What do you say to a week at my hunting-lodge in Maine? It's twenty miles from the railroad, and miles from any habitation. If you say the word, I'll send a wire to Sheeran, the station agent, and he'll send a man down to get it ready. What's the answer, Jim?"

Doctor Ayers pondered for a second.

"My patients, Rodger. I can't leave leave them."

Rodger Cartright turned slowly. His eyes glowed like live coals.

"Turn them over to Doctor Perry," he suggested. "If you keel over—well, he'll get your practice, and you'll be one of his patients."

"But suppose we get snowed in?" Doctor Ayres reasoned doggedly. "You know it's near time we had a snowfall. I'd be in a devil of a stew."

"None for weeks, Jim. Too early. What do you say?"

After several moments of mental debate, Doctor Ayers nodded assent.

"All right, Jim," he said. "I'll be ready Thursday morning if satisfactory to you."

CHAPTER TWO

FRIDAY broke cold and clear as the train pulled into Bangor. Rodger Cartright awoke from a fitful doze and smiled mirthlessly as he turned his head to find his companion gone. He was gathering the grips from the rack when Doctor Ayers returned. His face was flushed and he was smiling broadly.

"Morning, Rodger," he greeted. "Just stretching my legs."

The other man was silent. He led the way from the car and into the station.

Three hours later, with a series of groans and staccato explosions, the automobile from the station stopped before Cartright's hunting-lodge. Bleak and barren were its surroundings. Advancing winter was plainly visible everywhere. Giant, leafless trees stood gaunt and sombre, their denuded limbs swaying and creaking with the sighing wind.

"Return for us a week from today," ordered Cartright. The driver nodded and sped away.

All during the remainder of the day the two men occupied their time by working and reading. Then they retired for the night.

Toward daylight Cartright was awakened by the howling wind, and grinned in the darkness. Cat-like steps from the room adjoining aroused his sense of humor.

"The poor fool!" he gritted.

Next morning the snow was falling. Lightly at first, but by noon the swirling flakes were piling a blanket on the frozen earth.

"My prophecy was right," reminded Doctor Ayers. Cartright was preparing the noon meal. The physician was coming from his room, his face flushed, eyes glowing, step jaunty.

"Nothing to worry over," said Cartright without turning. "We've got to make the best of it. You'd better take a couple of pails and go to the spring before the snow gets too deep. I'll have lunch ready when you return."

Doctor Ayers was humming a bar of a well-known opera as he closed the door be-

hind him. Swinging the pails gaily, he strode down the path to the spring, some two hundred feet from the lodge.

As the door closed Rodger Cartright whirled and sprang to the window. His nose flattened on the frosted pane, he watched the figure of the doctor till it was out of sight. His face was aglow, his eyes reptilian, when he turned and rushed across the room.

At the doctor's room door he paused. Then he pushed the door open and stepped inside. In another moment he was feverishly searching the contents of Ayers's bag.

"Ah!" he cried, closing the bag and standing erect, a small object in his hand. He then hurried from the room. When Doctor Ayers returned several minutes later, Cartright waved him to a chair at the table.

"Sit down, Jim; lunch is ready."

The physician chatted pleasantly during the meal, even voicing the well-known idiom, "This is the life."

Rodger Cartright spoke in monosyllables. Being a reticent person, his gloomy mood passed unnoticed. The meal finished, they cleared away the dishes, washed and wiped them, then resumed their usual pipes and books.

The storm outside still raged, the wind shrieking through the leafless spruces and pines dotting the white waste. Within the sputtering logs in the fireplace sent a genial warmth through the rooms.

Toward twilight the doctor laid aside his "dead" pipe and book. He yawned, looked furtively in the direction of Cartright, then arose and walked into his room.

Hardly had the door closed behind him with the slightest of click as the key threw the bolt into place when Cartright, who had been easing himself in his chair with closed eyes, sat erect and resumed his reading. Several minutes passed. He laid down his book and arose, then walked to the table and struck a light. He filled his pipe, lit it, then walked to the window, leaving a trail of smoke in his wake.

His back was towards DoctorAyers when the latter emerged from the bedroom. Cartright smoked on. The physician was breathing laboriously as he asked:

"Rodger, did you happen to see a two-ounce bottle containing some—er, white tablets? I have been taking them for my heart. I thought they were in my bag, but evidently I mislaid them. Eh—did you see them?"

Rodger Cartright turned slowly. He removed the pipe from his mouth and hurled it into the fire. His eyes were narrowed to mere slits, and emitting from those slits were livid darts of hate! He walked across the room. At the table which separated him from the doctor he stopped. A snarl marred his lips when he spoke:

"Yes, Jim Ayers," he said with deadly earnestness, "I found your bottle, and here it is!"

Delving into his waistcoat pocket, he brought forth a cylinder-shaped bottle with a metal screw-top, which he slid across the table.

Doctor Ayers pounced on it eagerly, then staggered back with a loud cry.

"But—it's empty, Rodger!" he gasped.

"Yes, I know it's empty!" Rodger Cartright hissed. "Empty as my life has been since you robbed me of the woman I loved; empty as your life will be without your morphine, which now is mixed with the ashes on the hearth; empty as your mind and body will be before your sufferings end in madness! Yes, Jim Ayers, you robbed me of Beatrice, and for years I have planned and waited! Then that day at the office—the day that I suggested the trip down here—I opened the door and saw you using the hypodermic! I saw my chance!" He waved his hand towards the snow-coated window-panes. "This storm is my ally!"

Stunned, white to the lips, the doctor clutched the table for support. Slowly the truth dawned on him. The perfidy of the man confronting him! A wolf in sheep's clothing! Guised as a friend, while all the time plotting his destruction! A turmoil of rage took possession of him.

"You low-down dog!" he cried scathingly, advancing towards Cartright with doubled fists. "You whom I've befriended!

You who shared my home and my bread before I guided you to wealth! You say you loved Beatrice Ryder! Then, thank God that she is in her grave! Safe from the parasite, traitor, who pollutes her memory! Tomorrow morning I'm going home, and may the Lord help you, Rodger Cartright, if you ever show your face in Clinton."

Shaking with wrath, he staggered to his room and slammed the door. Cartright smiled satanically and flung himself into a chair. Every nerve in his body vibrating, crying aloud for the narcotics which were now denied them, Doctor Ayers paced the floor until a new day was born. All night long the storm had raged without. Daylight brought no abatement. Hollow-eyed, unkempt, faltering in his steps, the doctor crept from his room when he heard Cartright moving outside.

"Rodger," he begged submissively, for his tortured body no longer harbored the anger of the night before, "tell me that you are only trying to break me of the habit! Tell me that you are still my friend—that you didn't destroy the morphine! Come, Rodger, for God's sake give me just one grain."

Cartright whirled on the now servile physician and laughed outright. He mocked him. He spat with disgust.

"Tell you nothing!" he snarled. "Cringe! Beg! That's music to my ears! You have until now surpassed me in everything—at college, in love, everything! Now you are crawling at my feet, lower than a snake's belly! No, not one single grain of your beloved dope is left; all is in the ashes. Try them."

The fawning doctor straightened erect like a giant steel spring uncoiling. His face was distorted, eyes aflame. Then he sprang.

Rodger Cartright whirled and leaped aside. Doctor Ayers crashed against a chair, carrying it with him to the floor. With feline agility he arose and charged again, but stopped suddenly. A sinister looking revolver was pointed straight at his heart.

"Stay where you are, damn you!" raved Cartright, and his finger grew taut on the trigger. "I figured on something like that, so I prepared for it by locking up all the guns and ammunition. You can't get to Bangor! It's over fifteen miles—and see," he backed to the door and threw it open.

Snow was banked half-way up the opening and swirling flakes gushed in and filled the space about them.

"That's what you've got to plow through to get to civilization, Jim Ayers," sneered Cartright, kicking the door shut. "You can't do it! You couldn't live an hour in it! You'll stay here till you're a gibbering maniac. Then I'll beat you into a pulp and tie you up—shoot you, maybe!— Used up all your dope. Went mad. Attacked me. I tried to subdue my *dear friend*. Being overpowered, shot in self-defence. Every detail correct. Police of Bangor congratulate me on my narrow escape and praise me for my bravery. Fine! So, Jim Ayers, you see where you get off."

CHAPTER THREE

ALL the remaining hours of the day and all the following night the suffering victim never left his room. Rodger Cartright did not sleep. He remained on guard—alert, tense, pale. Another day waned and passed. Again night drew its curtain over the scene.

Automatically the avenger moved about, replenishing the fire and cooking his meals. He, too, was showing signs of the strain. He, too, had a case of nerves. Insomnia was leaving its mark. He started at every moan and sound from his tortured victim. But he only bared his teeth and chuckled.

The fourth day broke clear and bright. The storm, which had ceased its violence during the night, had stopped entirely. The vast expanse of silvery crystals sparkled beneath the golden rays of the sun. No bird or forest animal was seen.

The door of Dr. Ayres's room opened gingerly. He framed his pain-racked body in the doorway, and swayed drunkenly. His claw-like fingers gripped the sides of the wooden frame. His hollow eyes were dancing. He was on the rim of madness.

Rodger Cartright turned when he heard him. He shuddered as he met the doctor's burning gaze. A revolver lay on the table. For a listless moment Cartright had forgotten it.

But not so with the half-crazed sufferer. His sunken eyes wandered from the man who was murdering him mentally and rested on the weapon. Crafty seams gathered at the tails of his eyes. His unshaven visage was twitching. The lust to kill his torturer was plainly visible.

Calmly but shakily he cleared his parched throat. He licked his cracked lips with a swollen tongue; then he spoke:

"Rodger," he said in a hoarse whisper, advancing nearer the table, "won't you have pity on me for *her* sake? You have forgotten yourself. I ask you in the name of pity, help me, Rodger!"

Cartright threw his head back and laughed jeeringly. He taunted, scorned and profaned his victim. Then with a vile appellation he spat in the doctor's face.

"No!" he roared. "Damn you, no! For the last time I'm saying no! You cringing insect! You——"

The doctor rushed at the table, but Cartright sprang at the same time. Four hands clawed for the lone revolver, and Cartright's hand closed over it. Then the two men, locked in a deadly embrace, sent the table crashing to the floor beneath their weight.

Over and over they rolled, snarling, clawing and cursing, and struggling for the coveted weapon. Weak from loss of sleep and lack of food, Ayers was fast giving ground. Then a muffled report rang out. A cry of pain followed. Rodger Cartright's body grew limp and slid from the doctor's embrace.

The revolver had exploded in the struggle.

"My God, I'm shot!" Cartright cried out in fright. "I'm shot, Jim; do you hear? Help me! Save me! Don't let me die, Jim! I didn't mean what I did! I was trying to break you of the habit. Help me! Don't——"

His whining appeal fell on deaf ears.

CHAPTER FOUR

DOCTOR AYERS had painfully regained his feet. Breathing laboriously, he leaned against the wall. Through the haze of his obscured vision he discerned the figure writhing on the floor. Slowly the filmly mist cleared. He perceived the crimson fluid as it flowed sluggishly from a gaping hole in his enemy's side. Suddenly his tortured body was animated. He stared in amazement, doubting his senses. A moment before he was enraged to a blind, killing madness; but now there was an appeal for help. His professional instinct involuntarily became dominant. Instead of the murder-lust, semi-crazed, drug-craving creature, the eminent Doctor Ayers was reincarnated.

Squaring his narrow shoulders, he walked quickly to the wounded man. Kneeling beside him, he adroitly examined his bleeding side. Covering the wound with a handkerchief, he stood erect.

"Operation at once," he snapped out, looking into space. "It's the only thing that will save him."

Never once did he look down or address his remarks to Cartright. Who or what he saw about him in that somber room God alone knew.

Carefully he righted the fallen table. Just as carefully he spread a blanket and sheet atop of it. He then walked briskly to his room and brought forth his bag. Next, with superhuman strength he tenderly lifted Rodger Cartright from the floor and laid him gently on the improvised operation table. Then he carefully sorted out the instruments needed and sterilized them in a pot of boiling water that hung in the fireplace. All the while he uttered not a word. Once more he stood beside his enemy and looked coldly down at him.

"Cartright," droned the doctor, tearing away the shirt near the bullet-hole, "you've got a chance for your life if I can get the bullet. It is embedded so near the heart that the operation is of the most delicate and dangerous kind. The bullet must be removed in a very few minutes, and as I have no anesthetics with me, you'll have

to bear a little pain. You've done me a terrible wrong, Rodger, but the creed of my profession commands me to help you. Have courage, and I'll save you if I can."

His hand shook slightly as he raised a shiny instrument and bent over the prostrate man on the table. But a sudden convulsion ran over his whole wasted frame and his face blanched to a sickly yellow. The instrument clattered to the floor. Cartright groaned and looked up with terrified eyes.

"Rodger! Rodger!" cried Ayers with a mighty effort, "I thought I could go through without it, but I can't! My hand is not steady enough. There is only one thing that stands between you and the grave. It means your life. I've got to have morphine before I can operate! To save your life, Rodger, did you save just a half-grain?"

The wounded man's eyes were now rolling frightfully. His mouth opened, but emitted no sound. His head rolled from side to side. At last he mumbled incoherently:

"No—Jim. All—in—the—ashes. Save—me. Don't—let—me—die."

Doctor Ayers groaned alive and reached back gasping:

"Then God and His infinite mercy help you—for I can't!"

His knees buckled. He sank to the floor.

Two days later Station Master Sheeran led a party of his friends to the snowed-in shooting-lodge. He had feared for the welfare of Ayers and Cartright, and was loaded with supplies.

He knocked at the door, but received no response. Turning the knob, he walked inside.

Cold in death, eyes closed and hands folded across his chest, lay the body of Rodger Cartright. Doctor Ayers, emaciated, a shadow of his former self, sat crooning before a dying fire. In one wasted hand he held an iron poker with which he stirred the charred embers slowly, mumbling over and over:

"Life—in—dead—ashes."

CRIME PREVENTION TO DETER CROOKS

A "CRIME prevention bureau" is being organized in San Francisco by Chief of Police Daniel J. O'Brien, who says its objects will be to "take opportunity away from the crook and render it harder for him to make a living."

The first work mapped out for the new bureau is a survey of the burglar hazard of every building, store and home in San Francisco. To accomplish this the police of each district will study every building on their beats from the viewpoint of a potential burglar. The patrolman will discover the vulnerable points of houses, pointing them out to the owners, that the necessary precautions may be taken.

The inspecting patrolman will ask himself: "Are those windows close to the ground kept locked?"

"What about the skylight on this building—is it easily removed?"

"In this office building on Sundays do they keep watch on strangers who use the elevators? Do they report strange men using the stairways or other entrances on holidays?"

The latest wrinkles in burglar tricks and the adroitness of pickpockets will be broadcast to the public by the crime prevention bureau. The bureau will assemble exhaustive statistics on criminals' methods.

"Intelligent coöperation between the public and the Police Department," explained Chief O'Brien, "will reduce burglaries, robberies and larcenies."

The bureau, said to be the first of its kind in the country, has been placed in charge of a lieutenant of police.

Easy Money

By EDGAR DANIEL KRAMER

TOMMY BIRDSALL had a habit of thinking aloud.

"Being broke is sure hell," he was muttering, as he gazed out of the car window into the rainy dusk. "I'll check my bag at the station. It'll be safe there all right. Then me for the Friendly Inn and a session of wood-sawing in the morning. I'm as flat as a punctured tire."

As he ran his fingers through his upstanding red hair his freckled face was vaguely troubled.

"That's what I'll do," he went on. "After breakfast I'll rustle around for a job. That's my program."

As he tugged at his ear meditatively it was most painfully obvious that in the catch-as-catch-can tussle with existence Tommy Birdsall had by no means got the better of it. Slight, slender, clean-shaven, with a fighter's lean jaw, he nevertheless created the impression of a man with his back to the wall, cornered by the Fates. His clothes were threadbare and wrinkled like an accordion; his feet, propped on the seat in front of him alongside of his battered black bag, were encased in shoes that were cracking at the toes and were badly run-down at the heels. The soles were also very nearly through.

Tommy, absorbed in his gloomy thought, was oblivious to Blackie Dawson, the tall, dark young fellow who was standing in the aisle of the smoker, worn black bag in hand, presumably looking around for a seat, but in reality listening to what Tommy was saying to himself. Blackie's eyes brightened and he smiled. He was handsome in an unpleasant way. His thin lips were cruel and his eyes were full of predatory cunning. Upon hearing Tommy he had suddenly solved a knotty problem.

"Mind if I settle here?" Blackie asked, dropping his bag between the seats. The bag was an exact duplicate of Birdsall's. It would be hard to tell one from the other if the name plates were not marked differently.

"Help yourself," Tommy answered, tumbling his bag from the cushions to the floor so as to make room for the newcomer.

"Smoke?" Blackie queried, thrusting a silver cigarette-case toward Tommy.

"Thanks!"

Over their lighted matches they studied each other.

"How's tricks?" Blackie smiled pleasantly.

"Look me over," Tommy laughed mirthlessly, "and see how easy that riddle answers itself."

"Goin's been rough, eh?"

"No complaint about the going," Tommy answered. "The going's been fine, until now everything's gone. You look like a million dollars yourself. What's your line, anyway?"

"Easy money," Blackie winked wisely.

"There's no such thing," Tommy replied. "At least I've never come up with any of it."

"There's a sucker born every minute," Blackie laughed, "and I am of the opinion that all of them live. Easy money? Why, son, it's right down on its knees praying for the wise gazabo to come along. The world's just poking it at you if you're awake. The graft game's better than it ever was. I let the suckers work and bring the coin to me."

"Perhaps you're right," Tommy sighed, "but somehow I can't just get your stuff."

"Cheer up! You're young!" Blackie leaned closer and consulted his watch.

"We're at least two hours out of the city. What do you say to some eats? Come along. I like company. The grub's on me. This is easy money I'm spending."

"That being the case"—Tommy got to his feet—"I'll join you."

They were among the first in the dining-car and, as a result, they were very quickly served. While the waiter was placing their orders before them Blackie rose.

"Cigarette-case is empty," he explained. "I'll be back in a minute or two. Just go ahead and put on the nose-bag."

He hurried back through the swaying cars to their seat in the smoker. Covering what he was doing so that no chance eye might see, with deft, sure movements he shifted the leather name-plate from Tommy's bag to his own. Then very much satisfied with himself, he started back to join Tommy.

"Look this red-headed guy over so's you know him, Nan," Blackie whispered as he paused momentarily beside an over-dressed young woman in the first chair-car. "We'll be trailing through here in a little while. He's going to help us put across something big."

The woman laughed.

"Get him right," Blackie ended.

"Sure!" the woman drawled.

When the train pulled into the terminal they had finished eating and were back in the smoker.

"So-long," said Tommy as he paused at the foot of the stairs.

He was holding Blackie's bag and thought it was his own.

"So-long," Blackie echoed, "and good luck!"

As Tommy started upward the young woman of the chair-car came to a stop in front of Blackie in order to brush a bit of lint from her dark skirt.

"Tell Spike," Blackie whispered without as much as looking at her, "to trail the red-headed guy. He's half-way up the steps on the first landing now."

She nodded slightly.

"Tell Spike to shadow him," Blackie went on. "He has my bag. He's going to check it. Tell Spike to get the check or the bag. No slips. Get me?"

Again the woman nodded.

"Don't lose him!" Blackie urged. "Hustle, Nan!"

The woman ran up the stairs and was right behind Tommy when she passed through the gate. Blackie climbed upward more leisurely and, as he emerged, the grating clanged shut behind him. A tall, heavy-set man who, from the top of his felt hat to the stub toes of his shoes, conveyed the unmistakable impression of the plainclothes man, the stamp of the professional man-hunter, stepped forward.

"Hello, Blackie!"

"Hello!" Blackie replied. "But I can't say that I know you."

"I'm from Headquarters."

"Huh?"

"Come along."

"What's the idea?"

"If you don't know, Blackie," the detective answered, "what's the use of my telling you?"

"Can't a fellow——"

"Cut it, Blackie!" the detective interrupted. "Will you come along quietly, or will I have to use nippers?"

"This is an outrage!" Blackie snorted.

"Are you coming?"

"Sure!" Blackie asserted, yielding to the inevitable. "But I'm not in any special rush—see?"

The detective gripped his arm and led him off.

In the meantime Tommy elbowed his way through the crowd and hurried toward the parcel-room. He never dreamed that he was being trailed. He didn't see Blackie Dawson's arrest. The jam at the window caused him to change his mind about checking his bag.

"I'll be saving a dime, too," he was saying, as he carried the bag through the waiting-room and out into the street.

It was still raining, and the asphalt was shining in the glow from the arc-lights. Tire-chains were rattling as automobiles passed, taxi-drivers were shouting and trolley-cars were clanging. Tommy darted across the street and boarded a car. A

slouching, shifty-eyed, sallow-faced young fellow, with a cigarette pendant between his loose lips, the collar of his raincoat turned up, and a checkered cap pulled down over his eyes, squeezed in after him. At the Friendly Inn Tommy left the car. So did his shadow, who watched the swinging door hide his quarry from view. Then he hastened to a telephone booth in the drugstore across the street, from where he could watch the door through which Tommy had passed.

"This is Spike speakin'," he mumbled into the mouthpiece when he got his number. "Th' bag wasn't checked. Yeh. Th' red-headed guy's here at th' Friendly. He's got th' bag with him. Yeh—I trailed him down here, an' I seen him go in. He ain't come out—I'm watchin' th' place—see? They nabbed Blackie? Huh? They can't get nothin' on him. He'll be out in th' mornin'. Sure I'll watch here—I ain't lettin' this bird shake me. S'long!"

While Blackie Dawson was being interviewed at Headquarters and was answering all questions with ironical smiles, Tommy had gone to his little compartment that passed for a room and placed his bag on the battered chair. The walls of the coop in which he found himself were of flimsy unpainted boards for about six feet from the floor. The space from the boards to the ceiling was covered with a fine-meshed wire. A hooded electric bulb hung low over the bed. Tommy sat on his cot and stared around with a forced grin. From all sides there came the sounds of men snoring, tossing, grumbling in their sleep.

"It's sure rotten to be broke!" Tommy sighed. "Sure rotten! And there seems to be a crowd of us, judging from the music in the air."

He kicked off his shoes and slipped out of his clothes.

"I have a hunch," he murmured, as he reached for his bag, "that my pajamas would make most of the guests here sit up and rub their eyes."

Mechanically he pressed the catch. The bag was locked.

"Blast the luck!" he exclaimed. "It's locked itself and I haven't got a key."

Using his clasp-knife, he succeeded in releasing the lock, and the bag sprang open with a strange rustling sound.

"Gosh Almighty!" Tommy ejaculated, staring down into the open receptacle. "Gosh Almighty!"

He lifted a newspaper from the bag and scanned it quickly. Then glancing around him furtively, he closed the bag, scrambled into his clothes, turned off the light and stumbled out into the narrow corridor and down the stairs. The night clerk waked from his doze as Tommy hurried toward the street door.

"You beatin' it?" the clerk yawned.

"I'll be back," Tommy flung over his shoulder.

Tommy hesitated upon the top step to peer up and down the street. There was no one in sight. Spike was loitering in the shadows not even allowing himself the solace of a smoke for fear that the glow would betray his presence. With his ferret-like eyes brightening, he saw Tommy emerge.

"What's up?" he asked himself. "What's th' boob goin' to do?"

He did not have to wait long to find out. Tommy ran to the corner and signaled the first car that approached. Spike climbed aboard, too. As it was after eleven, the car was nearly empty, so Tommy went inside. Spike stayed on the back platform and soothed his nerves with a cigarette.

"Wonder what's stirrin'," he kept thinking. "This guy's pullin' somethin' all right. I gotta grab that bag."

"This car go to police headquarters?" asked the conductor.

"Within a block of it," was the answer.

Spike was all ears.

"Let me off when we get there, will you?" Tommy requested.

"Sure!" the conductor replied.

"Th' guy's wise," Spike concluded. "He's next to this game, I'm thinkin'."

"Here you are!" the conductor called to Tommy, after the car had turned and swayed and rumbled on for more than half an hour. "One block straight ahead and then to your right. You can't miss it. There's a big green electric light outside."

"Thanks a lot!" Tommy flung back as he scrambled off into the darkness.

Spike got off at the next corner and sprinted back as noiselessly as a cat. Tommy could see nothing in the thick tree-shadows into which he had plunged. He stared ahead like a frightened animal, listening, fearful, as he hurried on. Then there came the patter of running feet.

"Drop th' bag! Hands up!" Spike ordered softly, but his words carried in the stillness and there was no mistaking the glint of his gun.

"What's the game?" Tommy gasped, letting the bag fall at his feet and elevating his hands.

"Keep your dukes up high!" Spike sneered. "Try to pluck a bloomin' star down, even though it's rainin', an' we couldn't be seein' none if it wasn't in this dark hole."

"What do you want with my bag?" Tommy demanded.

"*Your* bag?"

"Yes."

"Don't make me laugh!"

"This is my bag."

"That's Blackie Dawson's bag," Spike answered with finality. "In some ways yours an' his is alike, an' in other ways they're mighty different."

"You're on the wrong track," Tommy insisted.

"Wrong track, huh? I been trailin' you ever since you landed in town. Kick that bag over here."

"Come get it!"

"Kick it over here!"

"Nix!"

Spike was no longer able to hold himself in check. Still covering Tommy with his gun, he stepped forward and stooped to grasp the bag. Tommy sensed his opportunity at once. Balancing his whole weight on his left foot, he kicked upward with his right and smashed Spike full in the face. The impact was terrific. Spike's body straightened like a suddenly released spring. His finger spasmodically pressed the trigger, and a report split the night, as the shot went wild. When he fell, Spike's head met the pavement with a resounding whack and his gun rattled against the bricks. He lay like a dead man.

"Too onery to die," Tommy muttered, as he leaned over him and caught his breathing. "He'll come around."

He gathered up the bag and the revolver and completed the rest of his journey on the dead run. He burst into Headquarters breathlessly.

"I want to see Inspector Trailor," he gasped. "At once! Important!"

The Chief, weary after more than three hours fruitless grilling of Blackie Dawson, swung around in his desk-chair as an officer brought Tommy in. From his coat pocket Tommy drew the paper he had found in the bag, handed it to the Inspector and indicated an advertisement with a trembling forefinger.

"That still good?" he asked.

"Good as gold," the Inspector grunted.

"The chap who delivers the goods gets the $5,000?"

"He does," Trailor answered. "Now what do you want, son?"

Tommy placed the battered black bag on the Inspector's desk and pressed the catch. The bag bulged open with a strange rustling.

"There you are!" Tommy exulted.

"Well, I'll be damned!" Trailor ejaculated.

The bag was jammed tightly with neat bundles of clean, crisp banknotes and negotiable bonds, and upon the white paper bands that held each bundle together was printed: "First National Bank, Utica, New York."

"This takes some explaining, young man!" Trailor snapped, his eyes boring into Tommy.

Briefly Tommy told him what had happened.

"Bring Dawson in," Trailor ordered. "He switched bags on you, Birdsall. He knew we were on the lookout for him for that Utica job. We nabbed him, but his bag was jammed with odds and ends of wearing apparel. Your stuff, I reckon. He planned to get the bag through under our very eyes

in your possession, and nab it later, before you got wise."

"A fellow tried to get it," Tommy told the Inspector. "He's down and out around the corner. Anyway, he was when I left him."

Then Blackie Dawson was brought in. His eyes flashed from Tommy to the bag on the desk and he laughed sneeringly.

"Is that the chap?" Trailor asked Tommy; "the pleasant fellow on the train?"

Tommy nodded.

"That settles for you, Dawson," Trailor growled at the prisoner. "Take him back!" he directed the officer who had brought him in. "Lock him up and watch him. He's a mighty clever crook."

"Wait till I get you, you red-head!" Blackie snarled.

"Forget it!" Tommy flung at him.

"Blackie Dawson gets a mighty long stretch up the river," Trailor laughed, as the prisoner was led from the room, "and you get that reward, Birdsall."

"Easy money," Tommy answered cryptically; "but what about that guy around the corner?"

"He'll take the trip with Blackie," Trailor retorted.

And Spike did.

A RIVER OF INK

TRAVELERS in northern Africa, have observed a curiosity of nature—a river of ink. The water is black, yet the streams which feed it are perfectly clear. Chemical analysis and examination have revealed the cause. One of the streams is strongly impregnated with iron from the soil through which it flows. Another carries tannin from a peat swamp. It is the chemical combination of the iron, tannin and oxygen of the air that turns the water black. This chemical reaction forms the basis of the most important class of inks known as iron-gall inks.

Iron-gall ink was first made in the twelfth century, but it was not until the fifteenth that it came into common use. The writer has seen a page from a hand written book on monkish satin, in ink, with the date 1445, and the writing is as clear, black and legible as on the date it was written.

The most important factor in the making of this ink is gall nuts, certain species of which are found in China, India, Japan and even in some oak and willow trees in America. A peculiar kind of insect, similar to our horsefly, bores into the small twigs of oak trees and lays its eggs. A little lump is the result. The egg shows with the gall and is soon converted into a larva. Eventually the larva becomes a fly and escapes by eating its way out. The best nuts for inkmaking are those that are picked when fully ripe, but just before the escape of the insect, as these contain the largest amount of tannin.

As the name implies, iron-gall inks are based on a liquid in which an iron salt is combined with tannin extracted from gall nuts. The iron salt is copperas and comes in the form of green crystals. These are secured in the United States. While there are other ingredients added, these two are the most important in the makup of this type of ink.

This liquid is practically colorless until acted upon by the oxygen in the air; that is, a pen dipped into such a fluid would make no visible mark on the paper. Most people, however, like to see what they are writing as they write, and so a blue aniline color is added. After the ink is exposed to the air the iron-gall compound develops an intensely black and permanent color, entirely superseding the original blue, which ultimately fades away. This change in color is what causes it to be referred to commonly as blue-black ink.

The Cigarette Butt

By JOE KLEIER

JIM DAGNELL rubbed his chin with the back of his left hand and gazed in a dazed manner at the bodies of Will Kady and Charlie Wagner, victims of his murderous fury.

Kady, the forest ranger, lay on the floor with arms spread wide, a hole in his forehead and a look of amazement and horror still on his face.

Wagner had slid forward off his chair to his knees, the back of his head resting on the seat of the chair, arms hanging limply, mouth open and eyes staring—a ghastly, mocking attitude of supplication. On the left side of Wagner's shirt-front a red spot was gradually growing larger.

This, thought Dagnell sardonically, was the result of what was at first a friendly little game of poker with Wagner. But Dagnell had lost rather heavily, and had attempted to win back some of his money by cheating. Wagner had caught him in the act, had called him a hard name, and had emphasized that hard name by leaning across the table and slapping Dagnell in the face.

Enraged, Dagnell had drawn his gun and shot Wagner through the heart. Kady attempted to interfere, and Dagnell, insane with passion, had killed him also.

Dagnell sniffed. The pungent smell of burnt smokeless powder lingered in the ranger station. With a shrug of his shoulders, Dagnell thrust the snub-nosed thirty-eight automatic pistol he gripped with his right hand into his hip pocket.

His mind was clearing, and he began to realize that his only hope of freedom lay in flight. There were no living witnesses to the crime, but Dagnell was certain that no jury would consider a plea of self-defence in this case.

Both Kady and Wagner were sober, hard-working married men, highly thought of in the community. Dagnell had come into the neighborhood several years before, working as a lumberjack in the winter and as a fire guard in the national forests in the summer. Dagnell knew that if he gave himself up, and the authorities took it into their heards to take his fingerprints and investigate, the wardens of some of the penitentiaries in nearby states could give some interesting information about him.

The only thing to do was to place as many miles as possible between himself and the ranger stations.

Calmly Dagnell began to consider the time that might elapse before the murders might be discovered.

The nearest range was three miles away, and it was hardly probably that any one would come to the ranger station for a social call at this busy time of the year. Some supplies were to be sent out to the station from Beaver Creek, a town twenty miles away, but these were not expected for two or three days.

The ranger station was connected with Beaver Creek by a telephone line. That same morning Kady, Dagnell and Wagner, the assistant ranger, had intended to go about ten miles into the mountains to cut some new trails. A sudden shower of rain delayed them. They had figured on staying for some days in a prospector's cabin near which they were to cut the trails, until their work was completed.

The murdered men's families lived in Beaver Creek, and had been informed of these plans, so there was no danger that they would grow uneasy if no one answered the telephone.

Dagnell lighted a cigarette and nodded his head with satisfaction. Unless some stray prospector or other blundering fool

happened to come along and find the bodies he would have several days of grace.

Methodically Dagnell picked up the scattered money and rifled the pockets of the dead men. In all he had a little over two hundred dollars in cash. He then shoved the bodies under a bunk, and arranged a blanket so that it hung from the edge of the bunk to the floor. He strewed some fine dirt on the floor boards where the blood-stains were, in that way partly concealing all signs of his fiendish work, in case prying eyes peered through the windows.

Dagnell thought of hiding the bodies outside somewhere, and entirely effacing the bloodstains; but that would mean some hours' delay; besides, a feeling of revulsion was beginning to steal over him, and he wanted to get away as quickly as possible.

Setting fire to the ranger station was out of the question. The smoke and flames would attract immediate attention in this dry season, as forest fires are feared, and search would promptly be made for the third man, if two charred bodies were found.

All Dagnell wanted was a few days' start towards Chicago. He was too well known in the coast cities, and most of the large towns in the Northwest. As a young man he had lived in Chicago. Furthermore, he never had had the misfortune to be wanted by the police of that city, so Chicago seemed to be the best haven for the present. Having finished his cigarette, he was very careful to extinguish the glowing end, as was customary with forest rangers. Then he drove the stub into the ground with his heel.

He prepared for his journey by stuffing some food in a packsack, also an old pair of overalls, a jumper and a razor.

Taking his hat, Dagnell swung the packsack to his shoulder, stepped out of the door and locked it. Without a glance backward he struck into the mountains.

It was almost noon; the sky was clear again, and the heat of the July day seemed to keep increasing as Dagnell strode along. His plan was to go to Butte, approximately eighty miles away, and take a train from there to Chicago.

For the remainder of that day Dagnell hurried on. The sun sank and the stars appeared. Finally, hardly able to place one foot in front of the other, he sank down on a rock with a grunt of weariness.

While smoking a cigarette he mentally rehearsed the events of the day. Venomous hatred flamed in his breast when he thought of the stinging blow Wagner had given him. As for Kady, Dagnell did not regret slaying him. If a man is hanged, Dagnell mused, it does not matter in the end whether his neck is cracked for killing one man or more.

Again he carefully put out the light on the end of his cigarette. It was done from sheer force of habit.

He ate a few mouthfuls of food, and then arose with a sigh. His muscles were sore and stiff from the unusual strain, but he set his lips grimly and walked, or rather staggered, onward.

A deer crossed the trail in front of him. Instinctively he picked out a vital spot and thought of the fine target the animal made in the light of the rising moon. Then the realization came to him that he, too, was a hunted thing, and that men would soon be trying to look over the sights of their guns at him. With a mumbled curse Dagnell stumbled on.

The hours that followed seemed nothing but a blur of rocks, trees, heat, daylight and darkness. In the daytime he traveled deserted trails; at night he would venture out on the highways. His knowledge of the country, gained while working in the forests, now stood him in good stead.

His object was to let no one see him, so the authorities would have no clue as to the direction he went. True, there was the possible chance that they might get bloodhounds on his trail. But the long distances he waded in many of the streams he came to would tend to baffle the bloodhounds, even if they did pick up his scent at the ranger station.

When utterly exhausted Dagnell would lie down and sleep uneasily for a short time and then go on again.

On the evening of the third day of his flight he neared Butte. Going into a lonely gulch, he tok off the clothes he was wearing and dresed himself in the overalls and jumper. After transferring his pistol, razor, money and sundry little articles to the overalls pockets, he placed his discarded clothing and packsack under some rocks. He now looked more like a ranchhand, and he boldly entered Butte.

Going into a second-hand store, Dagnell bought a suit of inconspicuous blue, a cap, shirt and a pair of shoes.

He rented a room in one of the cheap boarding houses, changed clothes, shaved off the growth of stubble on his face, and also his mustache. He resisted an almost overwhelming desire to sleep, but rumpled the bed to make it appear that it had been slept in.

Then Dagnell casually inquired at the hotel office about the different trains. He found that an east-bound passenger train was leaving from one of the railroad stations that same night a little after nine o'clock, and that if he hurried he still had time to get on it.

Hastening to the station, Dagnell bought a ticket to Chicago and boarded the cars.

Once on the train, Dagnell let his tired body relax and slept, awaking only when he was roused by a conductor or brakeman to show his ticket or change cars. The cramped and uncomfortable seats he occupied in the day coaches did not seem to interfere with his slumbers. At odd intervals, when gnawing hunger drove him, he would buy sandwiches at some railroad restaurant.

It was only after the train was on the outskirts of Chicago that Dagnell became fully alert and thought of the future.

The bodies of his victims must have been discovered by this time, reflected Dagnell, and his freedom now depended on how energetically the Montana authorities prosecuted the search. He knew that the man who was to bring the supplies to the ranger station had been given a key, so that he could enter the hut in case no one was there. Dagnell wondered grimly how long it took the fellow to find out the true state of affairs after he had unlocked the door. He remembered that he had on several occasions told some of his acquaintances around Beaver Creek of having lived at one time in Chicago. This fact gave him some uneasiness; but the description of him that could be sent out was meager at best, unless they could trace his actions in Butte.

He knew the real test was yet to come. If he could get out of the railroad station in Chicago without detection his liberty was practically assured—at least so Dagnell reasoned. He would hide in the city, and make a living one way or another until the excitement of the man-hunt died down, and then go to Mexico.

Well, in a very short time he would know the worst, and with this philosophical thought Dagnell gazed out of a window at the passing buildings.

When the train arrived at the Union Station in Chicago the fugitive stayed in the center of the stream of passengers as they came out. To make it harder for any detective to notice him, he kept close to two men who also wore blue suits and resembled him in build. Several uniformed policemen stood near the gates, but none gave him more than a casual glance.

Dagnell breathed an oath of relief as he found himself on the outside of the station. Just about forty-eight hours since he left Butte, and everything was going fine. Standing on the curbing of the sidewalk in front of the station, he was smoking a cigarette, trying to decide which way to go. It was some years since he had been in a very large city, and he was a little bewildered by the noise and bustle. His friends of years ago would be gone, and the old haunts changed, so he was the same as a stranger in Chicago.

After a final puff on his cigarette he tossed the butt into the street. It lay there smoldering several feet from him. Absentmindedly he stepped off the curb and as was his habit tramped on it. A taxicab swerved sharply to avoid running into him, the chauffeur loudly, and in no uncertain terms, telling the world what he thought of Dagnell's intellect.

As the murderer stepped back to the side-

walk he felt a hand fall on his shoulder and something hard was pressed against his ribs.

"The game is up, Jim Dagnell!" he heard a voice saying. "Don't try to draw your gun. Better come quietly."

The man flashed a detective badge and the fugitive's heart sank. He dared not resist.

"Say, how did you happen to recognize me?" he asked some fifteen minutes later in the police station, when they had taken his pedigree.

"Easy," grinned his captor, Detective John Graham. "At first I was not certain of catching you. Men of medium height and build, blue eyes, brown hair, with or without a mustache, and somewhere around forty years of age are rather common. That was all the description to be had of you."

"Then I don't see——" began Dagnell.

"And of course it was uncertain which direction you had taken. There were no clues," went on the detective. "But as you had incidentally informed several people out there of having made this town your home at one time, it was thought that you might possibly come here. So they phoned in from the ranch."

Dagnell breathed a curse.

"I had orders to watch at the Union Station," Graham went on. "When your train arrived I happened to notice you because you seemed unable to make up your mind where to go. That in itself didn't mean anything.

"Then I saw you throw your cigarette butt down and get off the sidewalk to put it out!"

Dagnell looked puzzled, and Detective Graham grinned again.

"City men are not in the habit of making sure their cigar or cigarette butts are extinguished," continued the detective, "especially if they risk being run over by an automobile to do it. I have been on government forest preserves out West, and I knew you were a forest ranger the moment I saw what you did with your cigarette butt. And it has fixed you for a hanging."

DOUGHNUTS TO THE CONVICTS

BEARING good cheer and doughnuts to convicts in penitentiaries from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast a gospel car left Philadelphia with a party of welfare workers, some of whom helped brighten dark days for the soldiers in the trenches in France. On the front of the car was a brass plate with the inscription: "In the Service of the King."

The automobile tour was planned by some of the workers following a visit to a convict camp, where they made doughnuts for the men and talked and prayed with them. The prisoners seemed so cheered by the unexpected visit that it was decided to spread the work to every prison to which admission could be gained.

With 35 cents as capital the workers set out. Their doughnut making, with doughnut cutters made from captured German shells, and the appeal of their idea soon brought aid to them, and recently they were presented with a large automobile, fully equipped, in which to make their journey. The first five gallons of gasoline also was presented. With this as a basis the party planned to dedicate the car at special services, before leaving on their trip, with Seatte, Wash., as the ultimate destination.

Letters have been sent out in advance to the Governors of various States asking that the workers be admitted to the State prisons, while a permit has been obtained admitting them to all Federal prisons.

Shoes

By FREDERICK C. DAVIS

A SCATTERING of rain fell from the dark sky and sprinkled over the unpaved sidewalk as Mike Keen mounted the one step leading to Sampson's shoestore. Inside the store a light was burning at the rear over a high desk vertically barred in front, and behind it a man was bending over the pages of a ledger. Keen knocked; the man looked up quickly, startled. Keen saw him transfer a black box from the top of the desk to a drawer which was shut tightly. He waited impatiently until the man inside approached.

"Store's closed!" came irately through the door.

"Wake up!" Keen rasped. "I don't want to buy any of your shoes. Don't you know an old friend when you see him?"

Sampson, the owner of the shoestore, looked more closely through the glass, then turned the key in the lock and pushed his head outward.

"What?"

"Don't you know me, Sam? It's Mike Keen."

Sampson's surprise made him inarticulate.

"Well!" Keen snapped, "can't you say hello to an old friend?"

"Mike!"

"Yes, it's Mike. Let me in, why don't you?"

Sampson opened the door wider, and Keen edged inward. The store owner quickly drew the shades of the windows and turned the key in the lock of the door. They walked together toward the rear of the store, stopping under the light which coned its rays upon the desk.

"Mike, what're you doing in town?" Sampson asked without a preliminary greeting.

Keen uneasily shifted from foot to foot.

"Never mind. The bulls are still no friends of mine. I guess you know that. I don't exactly grin when I see one."

"What're you going in town?" Sampson persisted.

"Why, I just dropped in to see an old cell-mate of mine."

"Quit that!" Sampson roared angrily. "Forget that cell-mate talk. Nobody in this town knows I've done time, and I don't want you talking it around. I'm running this shotstore honestly, and I'm making it go. I don't want you to ruin my business. It's dangerous for you to come here."

"Chuck the high-and-mighty stuff! I won't ruin your pretty reputation. I heard a long time ago you were going straight. Good Gawd! Selling shoes! What a life!"

"What do you want, Keen? You didn't come just to say hello. It's dollars to doughnuts you're trying to keep away from the police. Well, I can't do anything for you."

"So?"

"Yes. You've got to go. I'm just closing my store and they're waiting for me to come home."

"Well," Keen said deliberately, "before you go you just shell out a little bit. I'm broke, Sam. I've got to have money. I'm sleeping over at the Owl; it's dirtier than a hog-pen, but it's the best I could afford. Why, man, I've got less than fifty cents to my name. Tomorrow I'll have to get out. I've been having a run of tough luck, Sam. You got to give me some money."

"I haven't any money to give you."

Keen snarled.

"Come off of that! I saw you sitting there at that desk and counting a pile of bills! You think I'm a fool, do you?

You've got the money in that drawer right now!"

Sampson gestured toward the door.

"I may have, but I'll give none of it to you. Better get out of here, Keen."

Keen's growl was menacing.

"Blast you! You've *got* to give me some dough!"

"Will you get out of here?"

"Not until you come across. If you don't want the people of this town to know you're a jailbird you'd better dig up."

"I'll not give you a cent."

"All right," Keen answered loftily. "All right! I guess there are a lot of people around here that would be interested in what I've got to tell them about you."

As Sampson's eyes bored into Keen's the low roar of rain falling on the roof was audible.

"I'm not such a simpleton as you seem to think, Keen," Sampson said coolly. "If you tell people I'm a jailbird you'll have to say the same about yourself, and that wouldn't be exactly safe, since the police are looking for you, would it?"

Keen's eyes shifted warily.

"Never mind!" He rubbed his palms upon his thighs nervously. "You give me some kale, Sam Sampson, or I"——"

"Don't you threaten me! Get out of here, I tell you!"

Sampson caught Keen's lapels roughly. They struggled as Sampson attempted to drag the intruder toward the door. Keen's temper flamed hotly; he tore himself loose and crouched. Sampson's eyes glittered hard.

"Get out!" he panted again.

"Not until I get some cash!"

Again Sampson stepped menacingly toward Keen; but Keen was prepared. His hand flew toward his hip pocket like lightning; a gun flashed out.

Crack!

Sampson halted abruptly and almost instantly fell to the floor. Keen straddled over him, waiting for him to rise; but the form on the carpet did not move. Keen's left hand investigatingly crept over Sampson's chest; when it met something wet and sticky it darted away. He wiped his fingers as he backed off.

"Hum!" he said reflectively.

He glanced toward the curtained front windows of the store, then turned toward the desk, pulled open the drawer, lifted out the money-box and took from it a roll of bills. The currency totaled almost ninety dollars. He pushed the banknotes into his pockets and ran toward the front of the store again.

There he paused. Outside rain pattered against the panes and drenched the ground. The unpaved sidewalk and street were muddy. Should he walk across them he would surely leave incriminating footprints. He glanced at his unusually little feet; the very smallness of them was condemning, for they would print easily recognizable impressions. Keen glanced around the store. His eyes narrow thoughtfully as a cunning plan of action occurred to him.

Ignoring the still form on the floor, he stepped to the shelves filled with shoe-boxes, where he hunted for and found a pair of shoes of extremely large size. Then he sat and attempted to pull the large shoes over his worn small ones. After a tussle he succeeded. The larger shoe when laced looked grotesque and comical; it fitted tightly and uncomfortably, but it satisfied Keen. He quickly laced the other large shoe over his small one, after which he arose and walked with difficulty due to the weight of the two shoes on each foot toward the front of the store.

As he reached it he paused in alarm.

"Sampson!" an excited voice called from the street.

Some one outside rattled the door noisily. The shot had been heard and had raised an alarm.

"Good Gawd!" Keen gasped. He whirled, ran around the body on the floor, and searched frantically for a rear door. When he found it he shot the bolt open, threw the door wide, and ran away into the darkness.

The guilty man sped across the wet and soggy ground which clung weightily to his heavy shoes and caused him to stagger and waver in his course. As he ran he thanked

his lucky stars that the Owl, the shabby hotel at which he had taken a room, was located in the same block, and could be reached without the suspicious necessity of crossing the lighted street while wearing the noticeably large shoes. From behind him came confused sounds. He knew vaguely that the rear door of the shoestore was standing open and that some one had come outside. Keen ran on desperately. The huge hulk of the Owl Hotel loomed before him. He pressed himself against its rear wall as he listened. Hearing nothing definite, he decided that no one had pursued.

The rear yard of the Owl was packed down with many bucketfuls of cinders which had been shoveled from the furnace, and walking upon this hard ground would leave no impression; therefore Keen quickly unlaced the large shoes which covered his small ones. An ash-can stood close by, and he pulled a rumpled sheet of newspaper from the can, rolled the shoes into it, and threw the bundle into the can.

Then he quickly rounded the hotel and sauntered nonchalantly into the lobby. With assumed unconcern he purchased a cigar and a newspaper, walked up a single flight of steps, down a long and dimly-lighted corridor, opened the door of his room, divested himself of his coat and sat down.

He thought. Reviewing his actions, he endeavored to detect any misstep which might lead suspicion to him. He was sure that no one had seen him enter Sampson's shoestore, because he had taken care to knock when the street was emptied by the falling rain. Sampson had pulled the curtains immediately Keen had entered, so that no one had seen him inside the store. He was sure, too, that he had run undetected from the store to the rear of the hotel. He felt certain that the prints made in the moist intervening ground by the larger shoes worn over his small ones would never be associated with him. And he had entered the hotel unobtrusively.

There were only two things which he thought might incriminate him. The one was the stolen money; the other was his revolver, containing one exploded shell.

He rose, tore off the page of a newspaper and removed the gun from his pocket. With his handkerchief he polished all fingerprints from it, then wrapped it in the sheet of newspaper. Keen entered the hall, walked to the end of it and, having made sure that he was unobserved, dropped the gun into the depths of the trash-basket, after which he returned to his room.

The pack of currency he removed from his pocket and mentally debated what to do with it.

Finally he stepped to the window, pulled down the shade, placed the edge of the currency in the crack between the shade-cloth and the roller, and allowed the cloth to wind around it as he raised the curtain again. The money rolled within the shade; it was undiscernible from the room and was extremely unlikely to be discovered.

Through the window he could see Sampson's store. The rear door was open. He heard gruff voices faintly through the pattering of the rain. Once or twice he saw a circular spot of light appear on the ground in the path between the store and the Owl Hotel. Some one had found the footprints and was following them!

Keen sneered as he took up his cigar and newspaper again. He was safe. There was no opportunity for the police to connect incriminating evidence with him, nor was there any way to connect the gun in the trash-basket with him. Discovery of the money in the window-shade was too improbable to be considered seriously; and in the event it were found Keen would maintain that it was his own; that he had placed it in the window-shade for safety's sake, and they would be unable to prove his statement false. He sighed with gratification at the excellence of his alibi.

What if the police did come to the hotel? What if they even came to his room? What if they found the shoes, the revolver, the money? How could they connect them with Keen, and Keen with the crime? They could not! They could prove nothing! The rascal congratulated himself upon a perfect alibi. He was, he assured himself, over and over again, absolutely and perfectly safe.

"These damned police haven't anything on me, anyway!" he grumbled.

The sound of heavy footfalls sounded upon the steps at the far end of the hall. Keen's heart contracted with a spasm of fear as, lowering his newspaper, he listened. The footfalls, loud and authoritative, came directly toward his door. Then followed an alarming *thump, thump, thump* upon the door of his room.

For a moment fear held Keen in his chair; but with an effort he aroused, reassuring himself that he was absolutely safe, and stepped toward the door. He must keep his wits, that was all, he told himself, as he turned the knob. He opened his door wide.

"Hello!" he greeted, as he gazed into the eyes of a huge uniformed man whose blue-clothed chest was adorned with the gold emblem of a police sergeant. The gray eyes of the other searched Keen's passive face.

"Evening," he answered in a voice so deep it was almost a growl. "Mind if I come in?"

"No; come right in; make yourself at home," Keen invited briskly.

The huge officer entered; following him came a plainclothes man carrying a bundle. Keen recognized it as the newspaper-wrapped shoes he had taken from Sampson's store!

"What's up? Think I'm a bootlegger?" he inquired, grinning at the officers.

"How long have you been in this room?" the gold-starred man asked bluntly, while the detective's eyes glanced about the room.

"About fifteen minutes, I'd say. I intended to take a walk, but it started to rain, and I stayed on the steps of the hotel a few minutes, then came back up here."

"Oh, you did! What's your name?"

"Keen."

"Mine's Horton. Guess you're wondering what I'm doing here." His eyes remained upon Keen's. "Sam Sampson was shot a few minutes ago."

Keen puffed smoke into the air with utter indifference.

"Who is Sam Sampson?" he asked.

"Don't know him, hey?"

"Never heard of him."

"He owns the shoestore a little way from here. Not half an hour ago he was shot and killed. His money-box was empty, and he had been robbed. Well, to shorten a long story I'll ask you: do you know why we came to your room?"

"No, sir," Keen stated with assumed dignity, "I don't. I can't think you're so idiotic as to suspect me of killing this man Sampson."

"We came here," Sergeant Horton informed him, "for several reasons. First, a trail of footprints led straight from the store to the rear of this hotel. Second, we found the shoes that made the prints hidden in an ash-can in the yard. Third, you are the only person who has come into the hotel within the last few minutes, the desk-clerk says. Naturally we came right here."

"In other words, you suspect me of killing this man Sampson, when I've never even seen him and don't even know him?"

Sergeant Horton gestured apologetically.

"If we're wrong," he told Keen, "you can easily prove an alibi."

"I can." Keen quietly drew smoke from his cigar. "And I will."

The two officers listened attentively.

"The evidence," said the sergeant finally, "seems to point to you."

"Nonsense. You have a very weak case against me," Keen declared slowly. "In the first place, you'll have to prove I was at this shoestore tonight. You'll have to prove that I made the prints which you say led from the store to this hotel. And you forget that the criminal could be any of the servants who might have come in the back way unnoticed."

"That's right," the sergeant admitted.

"Well, can you prove I was at the shoestore?"

"Frankly, no, I can't."

"And the footprints: why, look at my shoes. They are clean, not wet or muddy. If I had run across the ground out there, as the man who killed Sampson did, they would be covered with mud. You see they *are* a little dusty; they haven't been cleaned lately. That proves I didn't tramp through the mud and clean them before you came

up. So, you see, your case against me won't hold water. It's full of holes."

Sergeant Horton puckered his lips thoughtfully.

"Your feet *are* small," he acknowledged. "They're smaller than the prints in the mud."

Keen nodded.

"You say you found a pair of shoes," he said. "Where are they? What about them?"

"Unwrap them, Jones," Horton ordered. The detective removed the paper from the mud-heavy shoes. As Horton displayed them Keen exploded with utter assurance:

"Oh, that settles it! Those shoes wouldn't fit me in a hundred years. They're too big for me."

"Seems that's true," Horton admitted.

"The man you want to look for," Keen told the officers, leaning forward, speaking in a wise whisper, and punctuating his speech with jabs of his cigar, "is a man whose feet fit those shoes. Can't you imagine what happened? The guilty man went to the store probably to buy a pair of shoes; couldn't pay for them; had a fight with the owner, this man Sampson, and in the fight killed him. Then he ran away in fright, and hid the shoes because he thought they would be evidence against him. Did you find the prints of any bare or stockinged feet around the ash-can where you found these shoes?"

Horton's eyes widened at the thought.

"I didn't look," he admitted.

"Oh, well!" Keen exclaimed dismissingly, "you're off the real trail. You're letting your man get farther and farther away from you while you sit here and talk to me. You must admit that I could have had nothing to do with the crime. Don't you?"

Sergeant Horton smiled graciously.

"I'm sorry I troubled you, Mr. Keen. Jones, I guess we'd better be going. Mr. Keen is evidently not connected with this affair. Sorry I bothered you, sir."

"Oh, don't mention it."

The officers bowed good-night as the criminal closed the door upon them.

He indulged in a low, mocking chuckle as he heard the footfalls of the policemen sound down the hall. Sitting in his chair, he sneered and belittled the ability of the officers. Some ten minutes he spent smoking contentedly, and planning to leave town at the earliest opportunity. Until:

Thock, thock, thock!

A knock sounded at his door.

He was startled and dropped his cigar. He had not heard footfalls come up the hall again. Then what——?

He impetuously jerked open the door and gasped:

"Good Gawd!"

Sergeant Horton, his gray eyes narrowed dangerously, was standing just outside leveling a revolver at Keen's abdomen.

"What's this?" Keen demanded in alarm. "What——" A shiver of fear went through his body.

"Don't go wild!" Horton warned. He moved forward. "Just stand still. Stand still and look at this gun in my hand. Recognize it?"

Keen's eyes widened to their utmost when he saw the gun in Horton's hand was the one he had thrown in the trash-basket in the hall—*his own!*

"I arrest you," the thunderous voice of Horton said deliberately, "for the murder of Sam Sampson!"

Keen tottered backward.

"You can't prove it!" he rasped. "You can't prove it!"

"Sit down!" Horton ordered.

"You can't——"

"Sit down!"

"Bewilderedly Keen sank into a chair, his gaze held by the hard gray eyes of the policeman.

"Raise your left foot."

Automatically he complied.

"Jones," Horton commanded, "take that thing off his heel."

As he watched Jones with unbelieving eyes, the detective picked from Keen's heel a bit of wet and discolored cloth.

"Take a good look at it," Horton told the astonished Keen slowly. "Don't know what it is, do you? I'll tell you. It's a little piece of felt of the sort that is put into the heels of shoes to act as a cushion—a protection against the clinched nails which

hold the heel. You've seen them. This particular piece, my dear Keen, stuck to your heel after you removed those big shoes."

"You can't prove it!"

"I can prove everything," Horton interrupted unperturbedly. "This little bit of felt that clung to your heel shows that you pulled those big shoes over your small ones. It shows you were in Sampson's store tonight. It shows you are the one who made those footprints between the store and this hotel. It shows that you are the one who threw this gun, with the exploded shell, into the trash-basket, because——"

"It's a lie!"

"Because there is a trail of little wet blotches on the floor of the hall, where you pressed this bit of felt, stuck to your heel, against the floorboards as you walked to the waste-basket and back. I saw that bit of cloth on your heel when I was here before, Keen. I wanted to make sure that one of the little bits were missing from this pair of big shoes. That's why we left you. There was."

"You——"

"There's no argument. Don't talk. I don't care if we never locate the money you stole. We don't need it. We have evidence that you killed Sampson—evidence you can't evade. See the little particles of cinders clinging to the wet cloth? They show that you walked across the cinder-packed yard at the rear of this hotel after removing those shoes and chucking them in the ash-can. Look at it, Keen; look at it good. It's going to send you to the chair, that little blob of wet felt and cinders!"

Keen crumbled weakly in his chair. In every line of his body was written defeat and guilt. Two sharp clicks sounded as handcuffs snapped around his wrists.

"And I'll bet a hundred to one," Sergeant Horton said slowly, "that you're one of these crooks that have said, one time or another, that the police haven't got any brains."

THUMBPRINTS BY TELEPHONE

THE possibilities in police and detective work of transmitting thumbprints by long distance telephone were demonstrated in Chicago before a group composed of Chief of Police Collins, Michael Hughes, Chief of Detectives; Capt. Evans of the Identification Bureau and others. Thumbprints were received from New York.

New possibilities in thief catching and arrest of fugitives were disclosed. Chief Collins was greatly impressed. "Wonderful," he exclaimed. "Combined with the radio, this invention will certainly make hard going for the fugitive, and will speed up the work of justice.

"For instance, if we could wire the thumbprints of Grant, for whom we are looking in connection with the Rondout mail robbery—if we could wire them down to Texas, where he escaped from the penitentiary—why, the thing has tremendous possibilities."

So enthusiastic was the Chief that he invited some of the company's engineers to demonstrate the invention before the International Congress of Police Chiefs.

"If we could have this system in operation throughout the United States and Canada," he added, "it would increase police efficiency a thousand fold. The thumbprints, much enlarged, were projected on a screen."

Three For Seattle

By EARL W. SCOTT

WHEN Number 9 pulled out of the yards at Kansas City the "Gran Quivira" Pullman 32 carried three passengers—Judge Henry, a lawyer; Marlyn Vivette, an actress, and Edgar Frank, a criminal.

Conductor Spottswood, in taking up their tickets and refunding claim checks, noted that all three read Seattle, via C. B. & Q. and N. P.

The season was late and travel westbound slack.

It was six o'clock and growing dusk. The train wound and swung around the many curves along the city's back door, and finally settled down into the long pull northward along the muddy Missouri for St. Joe and Lincoln.

At six-forty-five the judge rose and made his way forward at the second call for dinner. He was a big bluff man, with florid complexion. He had keen gray eyes that darted piercing glances at a world he never ceased to consider his enemy.

Miss Vivette soon followed to the diner, and Frank, glancing covertly about, took out a paper sack of sandwiches and began munching hurriedly. He washed down his cold lunch a few moments later with a draught of ice-water from the tank in the end of the car. He was furtive, white from long imprisonment and coughed regularly.

At seven-thirty the Judge returned, an unlighted cigar between his teeth, and passed toward the rear of the train, evidently bound for the observation-car.

As he passed the furtive Frank his eyes mirrored bewilderment for a moment, and then cleared. He had recognized him as a prisoner he had sentenced to twenty-five years for the murder of Clair Williams, a night watchman for the Workman Packing Company ten years before.

There was a scowl on Judge Henry's face as he left the car.

The papers had contained a notice of Frank's pardon by Governor Ray three days ago. Ray had been a political opponent of Henry's in the past. He felt that Frank was guilty, and did not approve of his release. The door slammed at his exit.

The white face of the ex-convict flushed and paled again with shame and hate as he glared at the disappearing form of the Judge.

He had not forgotten for a moment the man he held responsible for his long exile. His mind flew to the scene of his sentencing ten long years ago, when he had risen furiously and shrieked his resentment at the jury and judge, threatening to get him if the chance ever came.

Evidently the man had recognized Henry as he passed.

The door closed at the other end of the car, as the train stood at a siding, and Frank started guiltily from his reverie. He wished he could get out of this habit of starting at noises and feeling guilty if a man looked at him twice on the street.

Miss Vivette entered ruminatively. She had never quite gotten over her waitress days in New York before attaining fame. She looked annoyed as she flopped into her compartment and picked up a magazine.

It was midnight. The porter had made up the three berths and retired to the smoking compartment to doze.

At Ravenna he was roused by the conductor handing him a telegram for Miss Vivette, the lady in lower five.

Rubbing his eyes, the darky swayed down

the aisle of the starting train. As he entered the upper end of the aisle he glimpsed a slight pajama-clad figure darting from lower three and entering number ten.

His sleep-fogged brain did not function well. Perhaps he thought the slight, pale man in lower ten had mistaken his berth. At any rate continued jerkings on the curtains of lower five finally aroused the actress, and he handed her the message, then made his way back to his nap.

Presently frantic ringing from number five sent him tumbling out again.

"What will be the next stop, porter?" came the muffled inquiry.

"Broken Bow, I reckon, Miss."

"Help me get my things together; I've got to leave the train."

"All right, Missy; yassum."

At three-thirty Conductor Spotswood stuck his head into Porter George's room of slumber, and said:

"'Nother message; for Judge Henry this time. Lower three. Told me to have you wake him when it arrived."

"Yassah. This am the telegramist train I evah did see," mumbled the sleepy darky, again making his way up the aisles.

But repeated jerking and calling failed to wake the Judge.

"Lordy, Mistah Man, yo' am a sound sleepah, sah," growled the porter. He pulled the curtains aside and a limp hand slid inertly toward the floor.

George shook it gingerly. There was no response.

Then something about its coldness, its lifelessness sent a chill to the porter's heart, and he jerked aside the thin inner curtain.

The light from the one bulb overhead shed a soft radiance on the sleeper's face. His mouth was wide open, his face purple and distorted and, as the fear-stricken porter seized his shoulder the eyes flew open and set into a fixed and glassy stare.

Judge Henry was dead!

The physician who boarded the train at Alliance pronounced him a corpse—poisoned. But by whose hand?

Impatient passengers in the coaches ahead wondered at the long delay.

"Who were the other passengers on this car?" demanded the sheriff as he entered the coach.

"Just three, out of K. C. All for Seattle," answered the conductor.

"Where are they now?"

"Well, the young lady that occupied lower five received a message at Broken Bow, or, rather, a little sooner than that, and left the train there."

"Uh-huh! How long's the man been dead, Doc?"

"Four to six hours, I should say."

"That would be—what time did you roll into Broken Bow, conductor?"

"One-twelve."

"Uh-huh. The gal might be mixed up in it," mumbled the sheriff to himself. "Who else, conductor?"

"The little fellow in lower ten, and the dead man, Judge Henry."

"Little feller? You mean a kid?"

"No, a thin little chap, with a pale face and a bad cough."

"Well, where's he hidin'? I don't see him 'round nowhere."

"Lowah ten done left the train jus' as we was comin' in," interrupted George, his eyes round with the mystery of it all.

"Why the blazes didn't you say so before?" sputtered Conductor Spottswood.

This thing was getting on his nerves.

"Well, we'll git out and after him," broke in the sheriff. "Hank," turning to his deputy, "git off the car and wire Broken Bow concerning the girl in lower five. Spottswood'll give you her description. Now, let's get your name, porter?"

Edgar Frank, the crook, was behind the bars again. He was a disconsolate man. A posse had caught him two hours after the arrival of the train in Alliance, while he was trying to board an extra freight going east.

He knew what awaited him, and groaned in spirit. His back record was being traced, and he knew too well, also, what that meant. Why had he decided to catch that particular train? Where was his hopes of a new life in the far West now? Again, why did he let circumstances get the better of him? He

might have known that nothing but trouble could have come of that chance meeting with his old enemy.

They would find that he had threatened Judge Henry at the trial. What chance had an ex-convict against all these accusing facts?

It was an open-and-shut case, isolated, practically, in the Pullman of a roaring train—a man who had the reputation of being a killer; a girl who left the train as the only other passenger, and the Judge who had sentenced the man to prison.

Well, they would put him behind the bars again, and perhaps—he shuddered at the thought—worse would follow.

His cell-door clicked and he glanced up to see a short, gray-haired kindly-eyed man enter.

"I'm James Lockwood, Mr. Frank."

The prisoner blinked at the prefix. He had not been called "Mister" for years. He answered nothing. His criminal training had been thorough.

"I'm the doctor who examined the dead man on the train, and I'd like to ask you a few questions, if you don't mind."

"Shoot," stated Frank grimly. He seated himself on the cot. The doctor had the stool.

"To be candid, I'm not at all satisfied with the way this case is going. Now, it looks bad for you, under the circumstances, I'll admit, but some years ago I was responsible in sending a man to the pen, and it was proven in after years that I was wrong. However, that's all, by the way. I'm going to do all I can in this case to get you free if you are innocent. George, the porter, said he saw you at the Judge's berth curtains, somewhere around midnight. May I ask what you were doing there?"

For a moment Frank stared grimly at the patch of gray that was his window, then he remembered the word "Mister," and his face relaxed.

"Well, Doc, I'll tell you, though I don't suppose you'll believe me. I heard the Judge groaning something terrible, and went over to see if he was sick."

Lockwood nodded. There was a gleam of interest in his gray eyes.

"You say the 'Judge.' You recognized him, then?"

"As soon as he boarded the train. Honest to God, Mr. Lockwood, I meant him no harm. I'll admit I've hated him for years, but even if I could not see the uselessness of it all, I think the memory of those iron bars would have kept me clear of him."

"Well, what did you discover when you went to his berth?"

"The man was dead when I opened the curtains."

"Why didn't you call for help?"

"Frankly, I was afraid to. I knew I'd be questioned and suspected, and I was sick of all that. The more I thought it over, the stronger I saw the case was against me."

Lockwood nodded, his brow puckered in thought.

"They've discovered that the young lady on the train, Miss Vivette, the actress, sent the telegram to herself that called her off the train. She gave it to a lounger at the station in Grand Island to send to her after she was on the train."

Frank's eyes showed interest, but he said nothing.

"She left the train so soon after receiving it that the authorities have come to the conclusion that she must have been dressed and was waiting for it. Now I have done some looking around, and I wish to complete a few more investigations. Keep a stiff upper lip, Mr. Frank. I don't promise, but I might help your case a bit."

Doctor Lockwood was handed a message as he left the jail. It said:

"Merlyn Vivette taken suddenly ill after leaving train."

He pursed his lips and nodded after the retreating form of the telegraph boy.

"As I thought. Now for one more thing," he muttered.

Dell Bacon, the steward on Number 9 the evening of the Judge's death, laid over at Alliance where he made his home.

He was somewhat surprised to receive a call from Lockwood on the afternoon of the little doctor's visit to the jail. They were in conference for over an hour, and when the physician left there was a pleased ex-

pression about his eyes and a worried look on the face of the Pullman steward.

"You'll do all you can for me?" Bacon asked, and his chin quivered slightly. He had only had his present position for a short time, and his increasing family needed his salary badly.

"If you'd reported your discoverey when you made it, you'd have saved a great deal of trouble," retorted the man of medicine. "Now, buck up, Bacon; I don't think you'll lose your position. I thought we'd find something like this right along. Remember when I questioned you just after you left the train? Don't feel that you were so much to blame after all."

That Saturday in the newspaper extra that came out at three o'clock was the following account played up in bold-faced type:

HENRY CASE CLEARED UP

Doctor Lockwood, an examining physician, discovered that canned strawberries eaten by but two passengers in the diner on the west-bound train Number 9 caused Judge Henry's death by poisoning.

The charming young actress, Miss Merlyn Vivette, is now very ill, but recovering from the same poison.

Suspect Edgar Frank was held, but has been liberated. All the suspicious facts in the case are now completely cleared up.

It seems that Miss Vivette at dinner en route discovered a rejected but persistent suitor on her train. She sent herself a wire as an excuse to leave her unwelcome friend. Another case of artistic temperament..

The flight of Frank from the train was discovered to have been impelled by fear of connection with the case, as he had once threatened the Judge.

Much credit is due to Doctor Lockwood for his work in clearing up the mystery. Without his quick and astute reasoning the wheels of justice might have crushed to death an innocent victim of circumstantial evidence.

AN OLD BUNCO GAME

A WIDE-AWAKE young man can learn things on Broadway he never learned in college. Richard Hutt, a college graduate, discovered this early one day. It cost him $20.

Hutt and a friend were strolling up Broadway about two o'clock when they were accosted by two men, who appeared to be having an argument.

"Say, you're a college man, aren't you?' one of them asked Hutt.

"Yes," said Hutt.

"Well, then, decide this bet. Which is correct, 'perspire' or 'transpire'? I say, 'The heat makes me transpire,' but my friend says, 'The heat makes me perspire.'"

"You're wrong," said Hutt, who is a student of etymology. "'Perspire' is right."

"Oh, is that so?" said the stranger.

"I'll bet you $20 it is," said Hutt.

"You're on," said the other.

Hutt's friend, scenting easy money, bet $6 more. The four men went to the Hotel Claridge and borrowed a Webster's dictionary. Under "transpire" appeared the following definition:

"To excrete, as through the skin; to give off in the form of vapor; to exale; perspire."

The stranger pocketed the money.

"Look 'em over, college man," he said. "Perhaps there are some other words in the book they didn't teach you in college."

Hutt wasn't satisfied. In front of the hotel the argument was resumed. Hutt appealed to Patrolman O'Hare.

"It's neither," said O'Hare. "It's 'sweat.'"

Not having been to college, however, O'Hare took Hutt and the other to the West Forty-seventh Street police station. Lieut. Valentine, who is something of a student himself, got the dictionary. When he saw the definition of "transpire" he leaped from his chair.

Hutt insisted on making a complaint of petty larceny, however, and the police held the man, not because he got Hutt's money, but because ten pairs of dice were on him.

What Handwriting Reveals

CONDUCTED BY LOUISE RICE

Send us a specimen of your writing with the coupon printed on page 68 and Miss Rice will analyze the handwriting free of charge. The answer will be published in a future number of this magazine. Only a limited number of replies can be printed in each issue, owing to lack of space. If you desire an earlier reply in the form of a personal letter from Miss Rice, send us the sample of your writing and the coupon, and enclose 10 cents and a self-addressed stamped envelope, to cover the cost of handling, stationery, etc., and Miss Rice will promptly send you an answer. No readings will be given unless accompanied by a coupon for each individual.

—THE EDITOR.

L. O. L., NEWMARKET—Why, of course I can tell you why I say the things that I am going to about your character as revealed in your handwriting. There is your small, unobtrusive capital, for instance, showing that your personality is a mild and gentle one, and that you are not assertive in your manner. There is your moderately long "t" bar, showing me that you have a pretty strong will, even if your personality does not always show it. There is the fact that your handwriting leans forward at an acute angle, showing me that you are very affectionate—but not as emotional nor as demonstrative as you would be did your handwriting consist of more individual and irregular letter formations. I wish that you had not used colored ink, so that I could have used your specimen as an illustration. Your nature is one which will help you to win peace and happiness from life, even though the conditions are not always propitious, since you have that kind of an adjustable disposition which accommodates itself to life. A great many people, you know, try to reverse that process and get all snarled up in consequence.

E. E.—I never before saw so many flourishes in a handwritten letter. My, how much you do think of yourself. Conceit is a very bad trait of character. Learn to think more of others and less of yourself. You seem to be a steady, well-balanced young man, except that awful element of egotism. As a society man you would evidently shine, and as a business man I'd say you'd win in a commercial line. You should make a good salesman; your one fault is that you are a regular spend-thrift —can't keep a dollar. Why don't you study economy and learn to save?

MOLLY O.—I don't think, my dear, that any little girl of seventeen can have "a great love" for much of any one except her mother or father. As for you being in love with the writer of this specimen, who is a cold-hearted and quite blasé person, you are simply fascinated by a nature so different from your own, and also fooled by the belief that you are a grown-up woman. Of course I would know that this writer was much older than you, even without your statement, but if you were older that would not matter so much. What does matter is that you are one of the warmest-hearted children whose writing I have examined for some time, and this writer simply does not know what the word "love" means. Take a word, Molly O., from a person who for over twenty years has been getting letters like yours and who is proud of the fact that she has quite frequently been the means of making a foolish child like you behave! Remember this, too, and that is that the girl who marries when she is very young is deliberately cutting herself off from much that she will want of life as she grows older.

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"THE LAST TRICK," by Carl Garret Hodges

The short items and special articles have been selected with a view to gratifying our readers, and we hope you will enjoy them.

THE EDITOR.

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

104 "The Little Red Book," by J. Alexander Young.
105 "A Man from Siam," by Chas. F. Oursler.
106 "The Clue of the Emerald Ring," by B. Poynter.
107 "Hell's Hinges," by Hamilton Craigie.
108 "The Wolf," by Katherine Stagg.
109 "The Brass Button," by Jack Bechdolt.
110 "A Whispering Mummy," by Chas. F. Oursler.
111 "Trapping the Jewel Smugglers," by B. Poynter.
112 "The Missing Evidence," by Harold F. Podhaski.
113 "A Clue by Radio," by Capt. Jack Static.
114 "The District Attorney's Secret," by C. Oursler.
115 "A Man From Headquarters," by H. Craigie.
116 "The Girl in the Case," by Carl Glick.
117 "A Scientific Detective," by D. G. McDonald.
118 "Number Nine Queer Street," by Jack Bechdolt.
119 "Trailed by a Private Detective," by Gottlieb Jacobs.
120 "The Mouse Trap," by Edith Sessions Tupper.
121 "A Radio Mystery," by Capt. Jack Static
122 "The Clawing Death," by Beulah Poynter.
123 "A Master of Millions," by Chas. Fulton Oursler
124 "The Secret of Room 13," by Hamilton Craigie.
125 "Six Months to Live," by George Bronson-Howard.
126 "Seals of Wax," by Jack Bechdolt.
127 "When Crooks Conspire," by Harold F. Podhaski.
128 "The Mystery of the Blue Car," by H. Craigie
129 "The Detective and the Law," by Frederick F. Shuey.
130 "The Hand in the Dark," by Chas. F. Oursler.
131 "The Trail of a Rogue," by George Bronson-Howard.
132 "The Woman from Nowhere," by Jack Bechdolt
133 "The Time Detective," by Frank Blighton.
134 "The Whispering-Room," by Frederick C. Davis.
135 "One Clue Missing," by Chas. F. Oursler.
136 "The Doom of the Damned," by Joe Burke.
137 "The Consuming Death," by Gilbert Hammond.
138 "Mrs. Deane's Jewels," by Beatrice S. Luisi.
139 "The Brass Voice," by Jack Bechdolt.
140 "For Shame," by Wm. Hamilton Osborne.
141 "The Triple Cross," by Hamilton Craigie.
142 "Blood Rubies," by J. Werner Phelps.
143 "I'll Win! I'll Win!" by Arthur B. Reeve and Margaret W. Reeve.
144 "Phantom Fingers," by George Bronson-Howard.
145 "On the Yellows," by Frank Blighton.
146 "The Argentine Ruby," by Beulah and Shirley Poynter.
147 "The Barrington Arms Case," by Jack Bechdolt
148 "Hounded," by Frank Blighton.
149 "Direct Action," by Dr. Harry Enton.
150 "The Footprints On the Ceiling," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
151 "The One Chance," by Thomas Ripley.
152 "Weapons of Hate," by Eric Howard.
153 "In Reserve," by Frank Blighton.
154 "The House on the Rocks," by Jack Bechdolt.

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155 "Laughing Death's Trail," by Nels Leroy Jorgensen.
156 "The Medicine Dropper," by G. P. Wilson.
157 "A Question of Kick," by Eugene Jones.
158 "The Mystery at Roaring Waters," by Harry Adler.
159 "The River Pirates," by Hamilton Craigie.
160 "The Shadow of a Noose," by Jack Bechdolt.
161 "At 2 A. M.," by Beulah Poynter.
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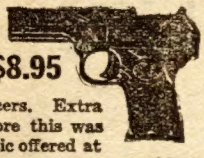

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By Walter S. Dean

Alas! that spring should vanish with the rose!
That youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!
—OMAR KHAYYAM.

A SECRET vital to human happiness has been discovered. An answer to an ancient problem which, sooner or later, affects the welfare of virtually every man and woman. As this problem undoubtedly will come to you eventually, if it has not come already, I urge you to read this article carefully. It may give you information of a value beyond all price.

This newly-revealed secret is not a new "philosophy" nor a financial formula. It is not a political panacea. It has to do with something of far greater moment to the individual—human happiness, especially in the later years of life. And there is nothing theoretical, imaginative or fantastic about it, because it comes from the coldly exact realms of the practical where values must be proved. It "works." And because it does work—most delightfully—it is one of the most important discoveries made in years. Thousands already bless it for having rescued them from disappointment and misery. Millions will rejoice because of it in years to come.

The peculiar value of this discovery is in its virtue for lifting the physical handicaps resulting from the premature waning of the vital forces of life, whether due to overwork, over-worry, sickness or the general over-expenditure of nervous energy in the strenuous living typical of the modern day. True happiness does not depend on wealth, position or fame. Primarily, it is a matter of health. Not the inefficient, "half-alive" condition which ordinarily passes as "health," but the abundant, vibrant, magnetic vitality of superb manhood and womanhood.

Unfortunately, this kind of health is rare. Our civilization, with its wear and tear, rapidly depletes

recuperative capacity, and, in a physical sense, old age comes on when life should be at its prime.

But this is not a tragedy of our era alone. Ages ago a Persian poet, in the world's most melodious epic of pessimism, voiced humanity's immemorial complaint that "spring should vanish with the rose" and the song of summer too soon come to an end. And for centuries before Omar Khayyam wrote his immortal verse, science had searched—and in the centuries that have passed since then has continued to search, without halt, for the fabled "fountain of youth"—the means for renewing energy and extending the summer time of life.

Now, after many years of research, joyful reports from thousands show that lives clouded by the haze of too early autumn have been illumined by the summer sun of health and joy; old age, in a sense being kept at bay, and the physical and mental vigor of former years again enjoyed in work and recreation. And the discovery which so adds to the joy of living is easily available to every one who feels the need of greater energy and vitality.

The discovery had its origin in famous European laboratories. Brought to America, it was developed into a product that has won the highest praise in thousands of cases, many of which had defied all other treatments. In scientific circles the discovery has been known and used for several years with extraordinary gratifying appreciation for the success it has demonstrated. It is now put up in convenient tablet form, under the name of Korex compound, for distribution to the general public.

Anyone who finds life losing its charm and color or the feebleness of old age coming on years too soon, can obtain full strength treatment of this compound, sufficient for ordinary cases, under a positive guarantee that it costs nothing if it fails to prove satisfactory and only $2 if satisfied. In average cases, the compound usually brings about gratifying improvement in a few days.

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